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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 24 November 2004

Mercredi 24 novembre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader, John Tory, I rise today to welcome the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association to Queen's Park. I see there are a number over here.

The OPFFA represents approximately 9,500 professional firefighters, each of whom is ready to put their life on the line every day to help keep our province safer.

Firefighters' dedication to serving Ontarians is evident in the OPFFA code of ethics. The code includes the following: "I recognize the badge of my office as a symbol of public faith, and I accept it as a public trust to be held so long as I am true to the ethics of the fire and emergency service."

The OPFFA is here today to raise concerns with MPPs on issues like OMERS autonomy and standards for the fire service. We hope their concerns will be heard loudly and clearly, especially by Dalton McGuinty and the members of his government.

In a letter to Fred LeBlanc dated May 23, 2003, Dalton McGuinty personally outlined his promises to Ontario firefighters. We expect the Premier to keep these promises, and as the official opposition, we must hold him accountable for them.

Earlier today, I was pleased to meet with Fred LeBlanc, the association's president, and Brian George, the association's executive vice-president, as well as Michael Gagnon from the Midland fire service. I was pleased to listen to their concerns and to have John Tory participate in one of our meetings later on.

I thank the OPFFA for coming out to Queen's Park, and I encourage all members to show their support for our firefighters by attending the OPFFA reception later today in committee room 2.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Each year in June, the municipality of Chatham-Kent hosts its Seniors' Information Fair. It is also an opportunity for the community to celebrate and recognize senior men and

women who unselfishly contribute to making Ontario what it is today: a dynamic and vibrant province.

I am pleased that the minister responsible for seniors, John Gerretsen, was at this year's ceremony to personally thank the many men and women for their personal achievement in adding to the growth, diversity and prosperity of our community and for the significant role they have played in building our society.

The McGuinty government is committed to improving our seniors' quality of life. Our budget sets out a plan to provide seniors with the care, respect and dignity they deserve. We will provide more nurses and more care in our nursing homes and long-term-care facilities. As well, eligible couples who require care will receive priority for placement in the same long-term-care facility. Our government will provide 2,300 new joint replacement surgeries, 9,000 additional cataract surgeries and a \$448-million increase for home care. We will add an additional \$125 to the property tax supplement for seniors. We continue to provide OHIP coverage for eye exams for seniors over 65.

I'm very proud of the McGuinty government's contribution and commitment to our Ontario seniors.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): On Monday, I had the great pleasure to visit Sudbury to tour local mining operations and learn more about the many issues facing the mining industry in northern Ontario.

When the member from Sudbury was in opposition, he was very concerned about the rate of construction on Highway 69. He even began a billboard campaign to emphasize the need to four-lane Highway 69. On June 14, 2000, he said, "I demand, on behalf of my constituents, that you begin four-laning Highway 69 from Sudbury immediately." In his re-election campaign he promised quick action on Highway 69.

You can imagine my shock when, driving along that very highway on Monday, I noticed that there has been no construction. After 14 months as minister responsible for the northern highway program, the member for Sudbury has certainly changed his priorities. The lack of construction on Highway 69 is just another example of the Liberal government's inaction in the north.

Four-laning Highway 69 is a safety issue and an economic issue. It is a vital transportation link. In 1996, the minister had 12,000 people from Sudbury fill out postcards that said, "Highway 69: worth the investment."

I guess he lost those postcards in his move to the minister's office.

Earlier this month, the minister did announce some good news, though. He announced a tender for 700 metres of highway just south of Sudbury. At that rate, it will take 157 years to finish the highway from Sudbury to Parry Sound. We won't even be around to know whether the government kept this promise.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): November is Adoption Awareness Month. Now is the time that we need to act and open up adoption records to ensure that the health of all adult adoptees is ensured and to respect their human rights.

As you know, a private member's bill, Bill 14, was proposed by the NDP. It provides access to birth registration and adoption records for both adult adoptees and birth parents. Bill 14 ensures that adult adoptees have access to their family and personal health information, essential to prevent inherited genetic diseases. Nonetheless, either party is able to file a contact veto.

We were happy to hear on Monday that the Premier still supports adoption disclosure. However, we were troubled that he will not act now. He said he wanted to review other jurisdictions. That work has already been done; all the homework has been done. We don't need to study this issue further. It shouldn't be watered down. The adoption community is tired of having its hopes dashed time and time again. We need to implement progressive adoption reform that protects the health of adoptees and guarantees their human rights. I urge the Premier to reconsider the year's delay he has proposed and to call the member for Toronto-Danforth's original bill, Bill 14, for third reading and a final vote in this Legislature. It will open up adoptions, and opening adoption records will prevent the stigmatization surrounding adoption and enhance the health of adoptees by providing essential medical information.

The time to act is now. It's in the government's power. Let's get the adoption bill done in Adoption Awareness Month.

1340

LYNN JOHNSTON

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Last week, one of my riding's and our country's treasures celebrated a milestone. Lynn Johnston, the celebrated cartoonist and creator of the very popular comic strip *For Better or For Worse*, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Patterson family.

Lynn Johnston is celebrated worldwide but lives in my riding, just outside of North Bay in East Ferris. She and her husband, Dr Rod Johnston, are local heroes—major contributors to countless local charities and community events.

Many of us have grown up with the Pattersons: watched their ups and downs, their children go off to school, their parents age, their nest empty. Recently, their daughter graduated from teachers' college. As part of the great celebration, real-life graduates of Nipissing University's faculty of education graduating class received a copy of the comic strip which illustrated the great day.

I have had the chance to see Lynn Johnston among her fans first-hand. In New York City, I watched at Book-Expo America, North America's largest book fair, as hundreds lined up for her autograph. And just last week I was lucky enough to be at Gulliver's Quality Books and Toys, a fabulous bookstore on Main Street in North Bay, where together with 30 or 40 fans we sang Happy Birthday and celebrated this great milestone. Lynn sang, served cake, and then signed books with her usual smile and humour and a personal caricature.

I am proud to rise today to congratulate Lynn Johnston on 25 years of making Canadians and people who follow her strip in over 2,000 different newspapers in 20 countries smile every day. Thanks for 25 years of smiles, Lynn.

YOUTH GAMBLING

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Speaker, I'm sure you'll agree with me; you were probably as shocked and disappointed as every other parent in this province when they heard the Premier yesterday simply laugh off when he heard the report that children are gambling in our schools, that there are actually young people who throughout the course of their lunch hour are spending time gambling. This comes from a Premier and a Minister of Education who felt it important to take their time to tell teachers and principals what can or cannot be in the vending machines of our schools. This is a government that sees fit to tell parents what their children should eat at school, but they are not prepared to take action with something as insulting as knowing that our children are learning how to gamble in an environment that should be there for academic excellence.

I believe that every parent wants this Premier and this Minister of Education to show leadership, to hold principals and teachers accountable for what is going on in the schools. If they can tell kids what to eat, surely they can come to their support and ensure that schools are a place for excellence in learning, not a breeding ground for tomorrow's gambling addicts.

VIETNAMESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of the end of the tragic war in Vietnam. One of Canada's legacies of the end of that war was the openness with which Canadians welcomed so many of Vietnam's talented people who fled that country to come to a land of peace and prosperity for them and for their families.

Last Saturday night, I had the pleasure of attending the Vietnamese Canadian Community Scholarship Fund's

2004 Academic Excellence Award ceremony held at the Meadowvale Community Centre in Mississauga. This not-for-profit organization, founded in 1992, annually recognizes, supports and encourages talented Vietnamese Canadians whose academic performance and community contributions reflect the excellence and the work ethic that our Vietnamese community brings to Canada. Since its inception, the fund has rewarded more than 100 Vietnamese Canadian students through its excellence awards and encouragement awards programs.

I am pleased to recognize two good friends who are members of the association, Thi and Sylvia Nguyen-Huu, who are today celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary and are in the members' gallery. I'm also pleased to send the congratulations of this Legislature to the association president, Mr Tran Van Dao.

I also send the congratulations of the Ontario Legislature to this year's 10 scholarship winners, all straight-A students: Daniel Nghiem, Cindy Ha, Jennifer Huynh, Ngoc Nguyen, Cathy Nguyen, Tiffany Nguyen, Lei Chin Cat and Christine Le.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I'm proud today to stand as part of the McGuinty government, which is taking a big step forward in helping some of our most vulnerable citizens.

All too often, couples who have been with each other for most of their lives are split up when they enter long-term care. These people deserve the dignity of being able to live together. That's why our government is easing the way for elderly couples to remain together in long-term-care homes so that they can continue to provide love, support and companionship to one another.

I know this will help people in my riding who have found themselves separated from their loved ones. Many in long-term-care facilities have found themselves in this situation.

This initiative is part of the government's action plan, announced last May, to reform Ontario's long-term-care homes. This action plan also includes hiring more nurses and front-line staff, providing enhanced care for residents, giving residents and their families more of a voice in long-term-care homes, a new public reporting Web site, and strengthening enforcement and accountability.

The overall goal is to ensure that seniors in long-term-care homes are treated with the respect they deserve in a strong culture of dignity and community.

I am especially proud of this plan.

HEALTHY LIVING

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Today the chief medical officer of health released a report that says obesity is becoming an ever-growing problem in Ontario. This government understands the severity of the situation, and that is why we are acting.

We are taking preventive measures to ensure that child obesity numbers go down. We have banned junk food in

primary schools, we are ensuring that children in primary schools have healthy eating options in our schools, and we will ensure that children get at least 20 minutes of physical activity every day.

We have also opened up our schools for community use, because not only does this government encourage citizen engagement in community activities, but this government supports and encourages healthy, active lifestyles.

Furthermore, we have introduced Active 2010, a comprehensive new strategy to get more Ontarians physically active. Active 2010 will boost total funding to the sport and recreation sector to more than \$20 million annually. The strategy includes Pause to Play, a campaign directed at 10- to 14-year-olds to promote a lifetime of fitness.

Obesity is a disease we can prevent, and this government is committed to doing just that.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

The Speaker: Mr Hoy has moved that the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs be adopted. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be counted.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Craiton, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Crozler, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Peterson, Tim	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Churley, Marilyn
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Jackson, Cameron
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael
Scott, Laurie
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Wednesday, November 17, 2004, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 24, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FIREFIGHTERS

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): It's a privilege for me to rise in the House today to pay tribute to Ontario's professional firefighters. I would like to acknowledge that many of them from all over Ontario are in the members' gallery, and you can see them here off to our right.

Today, I'm also pleased to acknowledge the great contribution the valiant men and women of Ontario's fire services make to public safety in this province. During the past two months, we have seen a number of events that show our respect and appreciation for the firefighters of Ontario.

In October, I was privileged to attend the annual Firefighters' Memorial Day service at the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst. Firefighters who died while on duty safeguarding their communities are remembered at this ceremony. We do this so that no man or woman who dies while protecting the lives and property of their fellow citizens will ever be forgotten. In Toronto, the fire service also held a moving ceremony for fallen firefighters.

1400

These services were conducted to honour the fallen, but we cannot forget the living. They are our everyday heroes. They're the people who are so good at their jobs that the rest of us sometimes forget just how vital they are to the safety of our communities. The government recognizes both the commitment and the contribution of this province's professional firefighters. We appreciate the hazards they face on a daily basis.

We also recognize that the kinds of emergencies firefighters must respond to can involve anything from fire to chemicals to radiological or even biological or nuclear threats. That's why our government is providing funding for three key central fire services to maintain their chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear, or CBRN, response units. These specialized units, based in Windsor, Toronto and Ottawa, can also be deployed anywhere in the province if they are needed.

I began by talking about the valour of our firefighters. Last year, we saw on live television just what it means to be a firefighter. When the Uptown Theatre collapsed in Toronto, we were all gripped by the heroism of Toronto's firefighters and the heavy urban search and rescue units. I'm pleased to say that our government is continuing to fund Toronto's heavy urban search and rescue unit, or HUSAR, as it's called. As with the CBRN teams, the HUSAR unit will assist any community in the province that may need its specialized training and equipment.

I would be remiss if I didn't also mention the Ontario Firefighters' Memorial, which will be located just south of the Legislature. The executive vice-president of the OPFFA, Brian George, is a member of the memorial foundation. The other foundation members are Neville Murphy of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, and Jim Richards of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario. The foundation oversees all aspects of the memorial. It is thanks to their hard work that we will be able to attend the official unveiling of the memorial next spring. This memorial will honour all those firefighters who made the ultimate sacrifice for public safety, and it will serve as a permanent reminder to all of us that, every day, firefighters risk their lives and personal health and safety to keep us and our communities safe.

On behalf of the people of Ontario, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our firefighters for all they do to keep our communities and our citizens safe.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I want to take this occasion to introduce my colleagues in this Legislature to a group of people who make a great contribution to the unparalleled quality of life that we enjoy in this province. I'm speaking of the members of the Ontario Environment Industry Association, also known as ONEIA. Today is the ONEIA annual Environment Industry Day at Queen's Park. I want to specifically mention the chair of ONEIA, Mark Vanderheyden, and the Environment Industry Day chair, Anton Davies. I know that all the honourable members will join me in welcoming the Ontario Environment Industry Association to the Legislature.

Today is an important opportunity for companies in Ontario's environment sector to meet with members of provincial Parliament and senior government officials. I know that many of you have taken part in these meetings and that we are all inspired by the accomplishments of an industry that generates an estimated \$6.9 billion in annual revenues. Ontario's environmental companies are succeeding by leading the world in goods and services that protect air, water and land. I'm proud to say that some of the best environmental work in the world is being done right here in Ontario.

The McGuinty government sees Ontario's environment industry as an invaluable partner. Their work helps meet a commitment that all of us share to ensure safe, clean, livable communities. We recognize that innovation must be at the forefront when ambitious goals have been set.

I want to echo the words of the federal environment minister, Stéphane Dion. He has spoken of a new industrial revolution where the environment drives creativity, innovation and competitiveness around the world.

Our government is taking strong action to protect the environment. We have introduced a bold new action plan for cleaner air. It includes air emissions limits for major industrial sectors that have never had limits before. We have set aggressive targets for diverting waste away from disposal. We have introduced regulations to make Ontario's hazardous waste rules among the toughest in North America. And we are making significant advances toward the protection of drinking water at every stage, from source to tap.

Ontario's environment industry is creating bold and innovative solutions for businesses, municipalities and households that enable them to implement our vision for a healthier environment. Our government understands that everyone has a role to play in the environment. We know that we can only succeed with the benefit of the expertise and experience represented by the Ontario Environment Industry Association. Our government is

counting on them as we continue to address difficult environmental issues.

The people of Ontario are fortunate that the members of ONEIA are on the job. A quick look at the round tables this afternoon—I certainly invite you to take time to visit them—shows that they are involved in some of the most challenging issues we face, issues like climate change, source protection, air quality standards and hazardous waste pre-treatment.

The track record of Ontario's environmental sector should give all of us confidence that we can meet these challenges. I would like to ask the honourable members to join me in expressing appreciation to the Ontario environment industry today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased again—I had a chance in members' statements—to talk a little bit about the firefighters today.

I really want to zero in on something the minister said and bring to the attention of this House some of the promises made to the firefighters by the McGuinty government in a letter dated May 23, 2003. That, of course, was before they were elected as a government. There were four key items—some of the issues they're lobbying for today. Here's what Mr McGuinty said:

"I would be pleased to outline my commitments to Ontario firefighters. First, as you know, a McGuinty Liberal government will ensure an increased supply in thermal imaging equipment for fire departments. I understand that more of this equipment would be a great asset to our firefighters in their work.

"I am also acutely aware of other needs within our firefighter services. Second, I will ensure that an independent audit of the fire marshal's office (FMO) is carried out. Jury recommendations following inquests into fire-related deaths have highlighted a lack of monitoring and intervention by the FMO in municipalities where public safety is threatened. An audit of the office is clearly in order."

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: I didn't heckle him.

"Third, I am committed to working with the OPFFA and fire departments across Ontario to develop standards for fire suppression. 'Guidelines' and 'points of reference' are simply not good enough. It is essential that our firefighters have clear standards in place to follow. My team and I will work to improve these standards, which would ... reveal staffing and response deficits within our fire services....

"Fourth, as outlined in my letter to the OPFFA earlier this year, I have openly expressed my support for OMERS autonomy. In my view, by amending the OMERS plan despite the board's objections, the government is abusing its power. Ontario Liberals have repeatedly urged the government to implement autonomy for OMERS. I continue to support that autonomy....

"We look forward to the opportunity to put our plans into action..."

These are all quotes from a letter dated May 23, 2003, by guess who? The man who has broken more promises than anybody in history: Dalton McGuinty.

So, to the professional firefighters, I wish you all the best. We on this side of the House—John Tory and the PC caucus—will continue to press the government to make sure that Dalton McGuinty keeps his promises to the professional firefighters of Ontario.

1410

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I'm pleased to welcome the Ontario Environment Industry Association to Queen's Park on behalf of our leader, John Tory, and our PC caucus. I would like to urge all members to attend the reception this evening. This is the fifth reception hosted by this group.

The Ontario Environment Industry Association represents over 1,500 companies and generates \$1 billion in economic activity. Overall, our environment sector employs 60,000 people, generating in total \$7 billion in economic activity.

I'll mention that as we move forward we rely on this sector increasingly as we struggle to meet the demands of something in the order of four million people arriving in this province over the next 20 years—we think of increasing air pollution, water pollution, use of vehicles, generation of waste and runoff, just to name a few of the impacts that we'll have to manage as population numbers shoot skyward.

Like the PC Party, ONEIA members are concerned with pollution prevention, reduction and management. They work for a cleaner and greener Ontario, and they recognize the importance of continuing to attempt to remove regulatory hurdles, barriers to the introduction of new technology in this field.

It's too bad that again the McGuinty Liberals are too busy breaking promises to be proactive on issues like this. The government recently introduced a spills bill—this wasn't mentioned in the list of government accomplishments just now for some reason—that would increase penalties and make companies guilty until proven innocent. I ask the question to the minister, what good are sanctions if you do not increase prevention, monitoring and enforcement? It raises the question, is this merely a cash grab under the cloak of environmentalism?

The minister's own industrial pollution action team said, "Ontario's environmental management framework is largely reactive, not preventative." In that context, I again welcome the Ontario Environment Industry Association to the Ontario Legislature.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats are proud to welcome professional firefighters from across Ontario to this chamber and to join in the applaud-

ing and saluting of them for their incredible commitment and contribution to the safety and welfare of people across this province.

The New Democrats want to make it very clear that we unequivocally support the right of professional firefighters to belong to an association, to develop their own constitution and to create bylaws that they are allowed to enforce without interference by any level of government, bar none. It is critical to professional firefighters, to the safety of firefighters across this province and to the welfare of communities that those standards that professional firefighters create for their sisters and brothers in their association are capable of being maintained and enforced by those same firefighters.

All the talk of memorials and memorial services is moot if we don't go beyond mere lip service to firefighters. Good words are not enough. Day after day after day in this province, from small towns to big cities, firefighters put their lives on the line and, indeed, far too often lose their lives in the course of protecting people and, yes, property.

It is imperative, if we truly value the role that firefighters play, that we as a province, as a Legislature, will enact minimum standards, enforceable standards, for firefighting services across this province, standards that address minimum staffing, standards that address resources and training available to firefighters, whether it's in the city of Toronto or the small community of Attawapiskat up in the riding of Timmins-James Bay, whether it's rural Ontario or urban Ontario.

This province has got to become responsible for ensuring that firefighters have the tools and the training to do the job that they're called upon to do day after day after day. If we don't give them the tools and the training, if we deny them those resources, we are insulting them, we are expressing disdain for them, and we are showing the highest disregard for firefighters who have given their lives in the pursuit of their professional duties.

Furthermore, we owe it to firefighters to ensure there is a fire marshal's office in this province and a fire marshal that support professional firefighters; that there's a fire marshal and a fire marshal's office in this province that support professional firefighters' goals; that there's a fire marshal and a fire marshal's office that build morale and build unity, rather than being disruptive and driving wedges between firefighters.

I say to you that we take great pleasure in applauding our brave women and men in fire services across Ontario. We should then commit ourselves to ensuring they have the resources, tools, training and staffing to do the difficult, demanding, dangerous, challenging job they're called upon to do.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On behalf of New Democrats, I would like to welcome the environment industry representatives to Queen's Park today and certainly salute the work they are doing. There are many talented people working in the industry, I

know, working very hard to come up with innovative solutions to solve our environmental problems.

However, the Liberal government is lagging behind the EC with introducing carrots or economic incentives to help industry introduce these new technologies and materials that are less toxic to the environment and initiatives to shift toward cutting pollution at the source.

Currently, in typical Liberal fashion, a small measure has been proposed in the carrots category through the environmental leaders program, but it is more cosmetic than substantive in nature. Companies that take the initiative to go beyond compliance levels receive recognition on a Web site and preferred customer status at the approvals branch.

I want to give one example, because there are many incentives in place, which could be in place here in Ontario, that would make a difference. I want to refer to a specific example that I raised earlier this fall when the government announced new standards for treating hazardous waste before it goes to incineration. There is actually an Ontario-born solution right here. A firm called Eco Logic developed a process of thermal reduction that has very low emissions to eliminate hazardous materials like vinyl chloride and PCBs. But because there are no incentives offered to them, incineration still reigns, simply because it's cheaper.

Without the kinds of incentives they're offering in the EC and other places, like low-rate loans, grants and other incentives to encourage the use of ecologic solutions, we will go on having the old kinds of technologies in use. We have to change that and bring more carrots to the system.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRONG COMMUNITIES

(PLANNING AMENDMENT) ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DES COLLECTIVITÉS (MODIFICATION
DE LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT
DU TERRITOIRE)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 26, An Act to amend the Planning Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1417 to 1422.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved third reading of Bill 26, An Act to amend the Planning Act. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo

Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John

Peterson, Tim
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra

Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad

Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marsales, Judy
Martel, Shelley
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Peters, Steve

Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Takhir, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Dunlop, Garfield
Flaherty, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie

Jackson, Cameron
Klees, Frank
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.

Scott, Laurie
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 56; the nays are 17.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On reading Christina Blizzard's column today, we know why the Minister of Health is absent, but we were provided with the Premier's schedule and were told he would be in attendance in question period today. We're looking for direction and advice.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I presume that the government House leader has a comment.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Will he be attending? Because you can stand your question down until later.

Mr Runciman: They said he's not going to be here.

The Speaker: So I understand he won't be here.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Right Honourable Ian Scott, the former Attorney General of Ontario, wishes to pass on his greetings to this House, to tell us all that he misses this place greatly, and to give his best regards to all the members of this House that he served so well as MPP for Rosedale.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order. May we proceed now to oral questions.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):
To the Acting Premier, Mr Phillips: Yesterday, Premier

McGuinty couldn't answer a simple question about why doctors voted against your offer to them. That may be why Mr McGuinty isn't present today, but hopefully you've been briefed on this issue.

It's become clear to the people of Ontario that the McGuinty health scheme is out of touch with the health care priorities of Ontarians. It's another McGuinty botch-up. The Premier set out five priorities in health care which he claims to have wide support for. He said he wants more MRI and CAT scans performed, yet the radiologists who perform these scans voted 95% against Mr McGuinty's failed deal. Are you working with these people or not, and how can you explain this rejection?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Just to refresh, I guess, the public's memory on this and that of the opposition, let's recognize that the proposed agreement between the government and the OMA was the result of nine months of discussion and negotiations between the OMA and the government. The OMA had nine people there discussing how we can revamp an agreement with the OMA. Those nine people representing the OMA voted unanimously in favour of this agreement. It was a proposal that would meet the needs of the public of Ontario, a proposal that would help to revamp the way health care is delivered in the province of Ontario and, frankly, a proposal that attempted to meet the needs of the medical profession. It was done in a spirit of goodwill and co-operation, and I would just say to the member opposite that that is the tone that we will continue to set with our doctors.

1430

Mr Runciman: This is Liberal spin. There was no agreement. There was an offer from the McGuinty government. The OMA negotiating team did not recommend. They were frustrated, after nine months, at not getting further and they referred it to their membership. That's what happened. Those are the facts. It's been proven a sham with respect to this argument the government is putting forward.

There's more evidence proving that this government, the McGuinty government, is the gang that can't shoot straight. The Premier said providing more cancer treatments is a priority; 61% of cancer physicians voted against your failed offer. The Premier also said he wants more hip and knee replacements; 62% of orthopaedic physicians voted against your failed offer.

Acting Premier, those who have the responsibility for implementing your priority list have said a resounding no. You're a rational person; you have the respect of this House. Tell us today that you will go back to the drawing board, talk to the people who have to carry out this important work and admit that the McGuinty health scheme is an unqualified failure.

Hon Mr Phillips: Again, I would say that the proposed settlement with the OMA was negotiated with, I think, nine members of a negotiating team from the OMA, and they supported the proposal. I think the Leader of the Opposition would recognize that that was done in a spirit of co-operation over those nine months.

The Minister of Health indicated in the House, I think just yesterday, that he will sit down with the president of the OMA, which is what I think the public would expect, and discuss the next steps.

Again, I repeat for the people of Ontario, this was not something that came out of the government without nine months of intense discussion with the representatives of the OMA, attempting to reflect their needs and also, importantly, the needs of the health care system of Ontario. That proposal has now been rejected and, as I said, the Minister of Health will be meeting with the president of the OMA over the next few days to discuss it.

Mr Runciman: There are some quotes in the Toronto Sun this morning—Dr John Rapin, the president of the OMA: "Rapin said the ... negotiating team signed off on the deal because it felt there was nowhere else to go at the bargaining table. He noted that the OMA board refused to endorse the deal." That's the reality, despite what the Acting Premier and his colleagues may wish to say otherwise, trying to portray this as a deal that was endorsed by the negotiating team. It was not. They could not support it, and they did not support it.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): As they did last time.

Mr Runciman: Yes.

Premier McGuinty's inability to rein in his bully-boy Minister of Health—the high-handed, Liberals-know-best approach—has not been helpful, to say the least.

There's more proof in the details of this failed deal. The Premier said Ontarians would receive more cardiac procedures, yet 69% of cardiologists voted against your offer. McGuinty said there would be more cataract surgeries performed in Ontario; 85% of ophthalmologists voted against McGuinty's deal. The health system is getting worse, yet the Premier is forcing people to pay more in taxes for the health care services you've privatized and the misplaced priorities. Clearly, the Premier and your swaggering Minister of Health are completely ill-equipped—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Acting Premier?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again, I say to the public and to the member, this was the result of, I think, 120 sessions where the government's representatives and the OMA sat down to reach a settlement. The OMA negotiators agreed with the proposal.

I would say also, in terms of what's happening in health care, that just a few days ago the Minister of Health announced substantial incremental funding for hospitals. Hospitals this year received about \$1 billion more than they would have received under your Magna budget. Twenty-one thousand more individuals are receiving long-term care; substantially more full-time nurses in the health system; substantial progress being made in the health area.

Finally, I would say that this agreement, the result of nine months of work, 120 sessions, attempting to work with our doctors to fundamentally restructure the way health care is delivered in Ontario, was an attempt to deal

with issues that frankly, dare I say, for eight years you simply didn't deal with.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Acting Premier. I say to the minister that families, hospital workers, nurses and the many health care executives who have had to submit plans to close beds, lay off nurses and increase waiting lists will take cold comfort from the lines that you just gave to this House.

Try as we might on this side of the House, we've been unable to get any answers from your government on the overwhelming rejection of your plan for health care. You're on the front bench of your government, you're the man who is the guardian of the public purse, so I know you'll have been very intimately involved with these discussions as a senior member of this cabinet. I have a very simple question that I'd like to direct to you personally: Why do you think Ontario's doctors voted so overwhelmingly against this deal?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again I go back to the fact that we spent nine months negotiating with the OMA doctors. I think the Minister of Health has articulated clearly in this House, and I think the people of Ontario understand, that there have to be some fairly fundamental changes in health care. This agreement was a creative step to address that. Whether it be to deal with doctors in underserved areas—and I dare say that probably half the members in this Legislature, at least, have problems in finding family physicians—whether it be dealing with waiting lists on cataracts, MRIs and other things, this was a creative attempt to deal with those issues.

Frankly, I think that when you are trying fundamental change, it often takes some time. I would again say that nine months of co-operative negotiations went on, 120 sessions, and the OMA negotiating team agreed with it. I'd just say that perhaps it's indicative of why you never tackled this problem. It isn't easy. But we are attempting to deal with some fairly fundamental reform in health care. It may take some time.

Mr Baird: The member opposite's response is one of the reasons this hour is called "question period," because it certainly isn't called "answer period," from the content of that response. I'm once again astounded.

Neither the Premier yesterday, the Minister of Health the day before, nor this minister today will stand in their place and acknowledge any reason why 60% of the physicians in this province voted so massively against you and your deal and your policy. I'll tell you why; I'll tell you what some of the physicians said. They disliked your attempt to be sneaky and to back-end-load this deal. Many physicians in this province were insulted by the attempt to give a kickback to physicians if they cut prescription drug coverage for the poor, for the disabled and for frail seniors. Many physicians in this province were astounded by the lack of recognition of the reality of experienced physicians who are close to or beyond the age when most of us would retire.

Acting Premier, will you commit to us today that none of these three terrible initiatives will be contained in any

future negotiations on behalf of the government with our doctors?

Hon Mr Phillips: Just so the public understands, this is a page from the agreement. It says, "The undersigned representatives of the parties hereby agree to unanimously recommend acceptance of this agreement to their respective principals." It's dated September 16, 2004, and it lists nine members of the OMA.

So I say to the Legislature, and very much to the public, recognize what the Premier has attempted to do and what the Minister of Health is attempting to do, and that is some fairly fundamental restructuring of health care to solve some of the problems that desperately have to be solved. This agreement was a creative attempt at that, and there are the nine OMA negotiators who unanimously signed the agreement.

I'd just say again to ourselves, this is creative, with some new ideas in it. Sometimes new ideas take a little time to find acceptance.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister, if he thinks this disgraceful deal with doctors will somehow improve like a good bottle of wine, he is sadly mistaken. Let me tell the member opposite, the president of the OMA refused to recommend this deal, the board of the OMA refused to recommend this deal, and last weekend 60% of Ontario physicians refused to sign off on your plan for the future of health care in Ontario.

1440

I say to the minister, doctors and working families are starting to question the competence of your government to handle this file. They're increasingly coming to the conclusion that Dalton McGuinty's government can't be trusted to manage our health care system. Senior members of your cabinet don't seem to understand basic elements of the deal and are closing their minds and ears to listening to why Ontario physicians so massively voted against this deal.

I say to the member opposite, why, again, does he believe 60% of physicians voted so massively against your plan for health care?

Hon Mr Phillips: I appreciate the rhetoric, but let's deal with the process. I think the public understands that fundamental change in health care is required. We are dealing with serious health needs out there.

For nine months, nine individuals selected by the OMA, who understand this issue, spent 120 sessions dealing with it. Then, after that nine-month process, they said this: "The undersigned representatives of the parties hereby agree to unanimously recommend acceptance of this agreement...." Nine signed it. You can say, "Well, why didn't it happen?" and whatnot. I would say that those nine individuals, who spent all that time to understand the needs of the doctors, unanimously signed it. I repeat: This proposal fundamentally reforms. It perhaps takes time for all of us to fully understand it.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Today Campaign

2000 released its annual report on child poverty in Ontario. In 1989 the House of Commons committed to end child poverty. Today, in Ontario, child poverty is worse. There are now 373,000 children living in poverty in this province, 100,000 more than in 1989. Acting Premier, it is a disgrace to have 373,000 children living in poverty in a wealthy province like Ontario. When is the McGuinty government going to find the will to tackle poverty in Ontario?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'll refer this to the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for the question. Notwithstanding that this report was based on 2002 data, the McGuinty government believes that even one hungry child is one child too many. We have taken leadership to eradicate this poverty. For the first time, we've increased the minimum wage. We reinstated social assistance. We've increased ODSP. We've also doubled the nutrition programs. For the first time in over a decade, we've increased monies to child care. We're taking steps. It is a tragic situation in a country like Canada, but we've taken leadership to address child poverty.

Mr Hampton: In fact, the policies of the McGuinty government are making it worse. The McGuinty government's failed health, hydro and social policies mean that people who are already struggling now have even less to live on. Your regressive and unfair health tax, a tax on modest- and low-income Ontarians: Someone with an income of \$200,000 a year sees his income tax rate go up by only 2% as a result of your health tax, but for a single mom with an income of \$30,000 a year, her provincial income tax goes up by 23%. Your wrong-headed hydro policies force low-income people to pay up to 27% more for an essential service we all need every day.

Acting Premier, why is the McGuinty government taking more money out of the pockets of low- and modest-income Ontarians who are already finding it difficult to live?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I thank the honourable member for the question. Indeed, we have also allowed free immunizations for children, which will save families about \$600 a year. The McGuinty government has also instituted the emergency energy fund for low-income families. And, for the first time in a decade—

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I hear the honourable member opposite from the Tory caucus yelling. It was you who made social assistance cuts. We have put them back. It was you who didn't increase ODSP in over a year. We put it back. It was you who didn't spend one penny of federal child care money on child care. We're doing that. We're taking real leadership. We're not going to take any lectures from the Tories across the way. We are addressing child poverty in a vigorous way.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you should be ashamed of that response. Your increase of \$3 a month in social assistance, your so-called increase in the minimum wage—all you did was increase it from 1995 levels to 1997 levels. Families are being forced to use food banks because, while you promised during the election to end the clawback of the national child benefit, you haven't done that.

Here's what children say about living in poverty: Poverty is, "feeling ashamed when my dad can't get a job ... being teased for the way you are dressed ... pretending you forgot your lunch" because you don't have one.

Campaign 2000 said today, "All that is lacking is the leadership and the political will" to really tackle child poverty.

Acting Premier, why is the McGuinty government failing the poor children of Ontario? Is it because you lack the political will or the leadership to do the job?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I guess the honourable member doesn't want to accept the fact that we're taking concrete steps to address this very tragic situation.

The honourable member has an interesting recollection of the facts and of history. In 1992 and 1993—remember those years?—the NDP raised income taxes on working people. A single person making \$20,000 a year saw their income taxes increase by \$160. The NDP increased tuition fees for college and university students by over 50%. And, under the NDP, hydro rates increased by over 40%, and gas taxes by over 30%.

I will not get any lectures from the honourable member on what they did to working families and what we are doing.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. Today's child poverty report card gave your government a failing grade on affordable housing. The Toronto Star confirmed what we've been saying all along: "The Liberals are not keeping their promise to build some 20,000 affordable housing units for 'needy Ontario families.'" The Star calls claims that you've invested \$65 million to build new units "bafflegab." Why? Because Ottawa, the federal government, is paying for those housing units, not the McGuinty government, and because what little money you have put in isn't your money; it was money committed by the previous Conservative government.

Acting Premier, when are you going to keep your promise to build 20,000 new affordable housing units for Ontario families and children who are waiting, who are living in poverty? When are you going to keep your promise?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'll refer this to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I'll deal with various other aspects in the other two supplementaries, but I'd like to quote former New

Democratic Party cabinet minister Anne Swarbrick, who said in response to today's announcement by my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in relation to a new partnership providing incentive funding and an innovative new housing program, "This partnership demonstrates that when community partners work together, we can create innovative, practical solutions that improve Toronto's quality of life."

This housing allowance program, announced today by my colleague John Gerretsen, is an example of that kind of partnership. I know that the member wants to be fair-minded and acknowledge the work that John Gerretsen has done, the work that our federal colleagues have done and the work that Anne Swarbrick has done in supporting Toronto's working families.

1450

Mr Hampton: This is about 20,000 housing units you promised to build. That piddly announcement today amounted to 400, as compared to 20,000. What's actually happening is that you're standing in the way of building affordable housing because right now, as we speak, there's \$300 million of federal money committed for affordable housing in Ontario. But where is it? It's gathering dust in a bank account while 150,000 Ontarians wait for affordable housing. Why is it gathering dust? Because the McGuinty government will not come up with the matching funds that are needed to unlock that money and put it to use.

Here's some advice from a self-described housing expert: "Don't pretend that taking weak measures and recycling other people's money are housing strategies." So said David Caplan. Why is \$300 million of federal money gathering dust in a bank account while 150,000 Ontarians wait on a list for affordable housing?

Hon Mr Caplan: I appreciate the quote, but the member is, of course, quite wrong in his facts. Monies are not gathering dust. We have unlocked over \$63 million and put it into much-needed affordable housing. Yesterday, the Premier outlined 597 units in Waterloo, 104 units in London, 94 units of affordable housing in Wellington county and 895 units here in the city of Toronto, and I could go on. In addition to the already-mentioned 2,700 units of affordable housing, there's an additional almost 400 new, affordable ownership units which have come on stream—over \$65 million in new housing.

Our government has done more in eight months than the previous government did in eight years. If the member wants a review of history, I can assure the member that we have learned the lessons of your failed housing program and we're not going to repeat it to the point where the Provincial Auditor urges the government to shut it down.

Mr Hampton: In everything you just announced, the money was actually committed under the former government. That's why the Toronto Star is so critical of you. You take federal money and try to take credit for that, and then you take money committed by the former government and try to take credit for that.

You mentioned the announcement you made about the 400 rent-supplemented units in the city of Toronto. Let me remind you that you promised 35,000 rent-supplemented units in the election. If you do the numbers, at the rate you're going, it will take you 87 and a half years to provide the 35,000 rent-supplemented units.

Is it going to take 87 and a half years? Is it going to take more homeless people being arrested on the steps of Queen's Park? Is it going to take more embarrassment of your government? When are you going to keep your promise to build the affordable housing units so that people who are desperately waiting for affordable housing will have a place to live?

Hon Mr Caplan: Now we know why the member's housing policies were a failure: He's got a basic problem with mathematics. We have unlocked over \$65 million of housing dollars, not money announced by the previous government. They didn't spend any money; they cancelled affordable housing programs. You were there.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Caplan: That's what you said for a lot of years, I say to my friend the leader of the third party.

We have unlocked those dollars; we are building the units. In fact, we have gone farther in a few short months than the previous government did in their entire eight years, and there's much more on the way.

I would say to the member, tone down the rhetoric and look at the facts. You will see that the McGuinty government is back in the housing game. It is welcomed by housing providers. We have a new partnership. In fact, we are negotiating a new arrangement with the federal government to access fully the federal dollars that will be available. I look forward to a renewed housing program here in Ontario, both the kind that my colleague announced today relating to housing allowances, as well as a new capital program.

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the Attorney General. For the last few months, you've been preoccupied with developing pit bull legislation for the province. Perhaps, Minister, you can turn your attention to protecting children who are trapped in sexual exploitation and prostitution in this province. Two years ago, legislation was passed to protect these children specifically. The Office for Victims of Crime worked directly with your seatmate and cabinet colleague the member for Sudbury, who championed this cause—he worked directly with the Office for Victims of Crime—and resulted in Bill 86. You have been the Attorney General now for well over a year. Why have you not proclaimed Bill 86, and why have no funds been allocated to get these safe houses for these children victims in Ontario? Why has it taken you so long to act in the interest of these vulnerable children?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): The minister of children's services.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question, and indeed this is an issue of great concern to all of us in this province. The exploitation of children in this way has got to be one of the lowest acts of humankind. We are not proclaiming the former bill—first of all, you didn't proclaim it—and if you're asking me why we're not proclaiming it, it's because it's not comprehensive enough. We are taking a very serious look at Mr Bartolucci's bill, and I want to congratulate my colleague for his comprehensiveness on his bill.

Mr Jackson: I think it's disgraceful that the Attorney General of this province has no opinion on this important issue. He offs it to a minister who doesn't have the budget, the resources or the mandate. I'm talking about a report that the Office for Victims of Crime, through their victims' justice fund, financed. Some \$50,000 went into this fund to come up with Martin's Hope—the Martin Kruze incident. The minister will be aware of that. This man committed suicide in desperate reflection upon the inadequacies of the justice system in this province, a system you are responsible for, both at federal table discussions and within this province—not that minister over there; you're the Attorney General of this province.

You are sitting on over \$45 million in the victims' justice fund in this province, funds you're not applying to these vulnerable children in our province. So don't off your question to a minister with no budget. Do your job and stick up for these people. Frankly, they're more important than pit bull legislation. It's about time you got it.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Well, it might not have been much of a budget under his government, but we have a very healthy budget in the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

One of the reasons we have not gone forward on this bill is that stakeholders were telling us, "Make sure you have the services in place when you proclaim or introduce a new bill," which is what we are doing in our first year of our mandate. For the first time in a decade, we increased spending on children's mental health. Without these services, you can have the strictest laws, but if there aren't the services to help these children who are sexually exploited, you will be defeating the purpose. We are working hard on this issue—very hard.

CHILD CARE

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. There is a crisis in child care funding right across the province. Regulated child care is becoming a luxury in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Your election platform promised \$300 million in new provincial funding for child care, which you said would serve an additional 330,000 children. To date, we've seen not a penny of new provincial funding for children. Minister, my question is simple: When are we going to see the \$300 million in new

provincial funding for child care that you promised more than a year ago?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank the honourable member from Hamilton for the question. Indeed, child care was one of the main promises of our platform. I'm glad to see so much interest in our Best Start plan. We will be announcing our Best Start plan tomorrow, and it will be a comprehensive plan, one with a seamless transition to school age. We're very proud of it, and that's all I'm going to say about that at this moment, but I want to reassure the member that I have taken all her concerns under consideration.

1500

Ms Horwath: Well, Minister, you promised you would devote \$300 million in new provincial funding to regulated child care and you haven't done it yet. It's a mystery, Minister: the case of the missing \$300 million, worthy of a Sherlock Holmes investigation. It's gone AWOL; not one penny of the promised new provincial funding for child care has seen the light of day.

Don't you think it's time that you honoured at least one of your election promises? Will you confirm right now that you will commit the \$300 million in provincial funding that you promised during the election and use it in its entirety for a comprehensive, not-for-profit system of quality regulated child care? Or would you prefer to be known as the minister who breaks promises to children?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I would like to remind the honourable member that for the first time in a decade we increased funding to child care in this province by over \$60 million, and we have never hidden the fact that that first allotment was federal money.

That government didn't put a penny extra into child care. They did not believe in it; they were ideologically opposed to it. But the research is in: The early years are the most important years in a child's life, and we will invest.

I know it's hard for you to accept that we are actually fulfilling this very important commitment, but we are. And stay tuned for tomorrow's announcement.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Our government has made a commitment to provide direct assistance to families in greatest need of housing. We promised to help people with low incomes, many currently living in shelters or spending more than half their income on rent. We promised to help them find safe, decent, affordable places to live.

Minister, today you made an announcement about a very innovative program that demonstrates the McGuinty government's goal of promoting affordable housing in Ontario. Can you please inform Ontarians of some of the details of this announcement and describe how our government is delivering on our commitment?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the member for her question and also for her involvement in helping to bring all the various parties together.

Today, in partnership with the city of Toronto, the Toronto Community Housing Corp and the local landlords, the McGuinty government, our government, is reducing the social housing waiting list here in Toronto by 400 individual families and members. The pilot project that was announced today, in the amount of \$3.6 million over five years, will help approximately 400 low-income households, and we don't think that's piddly: 400 individual families that are either living in shelters or paying more than 50% of their income on rent are going to be helped in this regard, to remove them from the waiting list.

We believe this is a great program. Let's just see what David Miller had to say about this: "This pilot program will help hundreds of deserving Torontonians find a place to call home. It also creates a framework for co-operation that will help us push forward with other initiatives to address this city's affordable housing crisis."

It's a start, and it's a start in the right direction, to help 400 families in this city.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My supplementary question is to the same minister. Minister, your announcement illustrates our government's ability to work with communities to try to help improve Ontario's quality of life. Can you please inform Ontarians and constituents in my riding, Scarborough Southwest, which has a large percentage of people on affordable housing or in need of assistance, as well as those across Ontario, how you plan to continue to assist in making this program work so that people can function properly in low-income situations?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: I hear a lot of catcalls coming from across the House, but we think it's an excellent example in which government can work together with the private sector—the landlords, in this case—the Toronto Community Foundation, the Toronto Housing Corp and the city of Toronto. It's a start in the right direction. We are helping 400 families in a pilot project.

This is the first time that a housing allowance program of this nature has ever been accepted and endorsed by a government in Ontario. The NDP didn't do it. They didn't create one housing allowance program. The Tories certainly didn't do it. We're on the right way of solving the affordable housing program in this province.

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of the Environment: While you've been attempting to put out garbage fires, Ontario's landfill crisis continues to grow. My question is about the Edwards landfill in Haldimand county, specifically about

the application for a provisional certificate of approval to expand the Edwards landfill to receive Toronto area garbage.

Given that this C of A application calls for a 5,000% increase in the daily fill rate and changes the allowable waste to now include residential, commercial, institutional and industrial waste, and given that under section 30 of the Environmental Protection Act, the director is compelled to conduct a hearing before issuing a C of A in these kinds of situations, it appears you have no choice but to require a hearing before the Environmental Review Tribunal. Minister, can you tell the people of Haldimand county when the hearing will be held?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I appreciate the question. It's an opportunity for me to clarify the process. The honourable member mentioned in his remarks that it is the director who plays a very important role when there are amendments to a certificate of approval, and it is the director who would make those determinations.

With regard to the proposals that have been put forward for the Edwards landfill, I think it's also important that the members of this House understand that, as the ministry is considering this application to amend the certificate of approval, people who live within a two-kilometre radius of the site have been informed. There has been a public open house; it was held in June. There has been information in the local paper. A public liaison committee has been created. Three members of the public were appointed to that public liaison committee. Our government believes there are processes in place that ensure the concerns of the public have a venue to be heard.

Mr Barrett: I'm not dealing with the problems in consultation. Minister, under section 30 of the EPA, the director is compelled to conduct a hearing before issuing a C of A where the application is made for enlargement of a waste disposal site, and I quote in part, or "any other waste the director ascertains is the equivalent of the domestic waste of not less than 1,500 persons." If you feel the director is not compelled to conduct this hearing under section 30, it still would be a factor in favour of exercising your ministerial discretion under section 32.

Minister, there is a significant change in the nature and the daily volume of allowable waste—as you know, from letters coming in—at Edwards landfill. Surely this is enough to convince a government minister to exercise her discretion under section 32 and order a public hearing. Again, when could a hearing be held?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I think it's important that I clarify for the honourable member and the members of this House that the director has a responsibility to make a determination. If, within the community, people object to the decision the director makes, they can appeal that to the Environmental Review Tribunal. The Environmental Review Tribunal then considers that, and if people continue to be unhappy with the determinations that are made around the Edwards landfill, then that decision comes to me. That is appealed to me as the minister.

It's totally inappropriate for me to interject myself into the process prematurely and I have no intention of doing that. I am a strong proponent of following the process. I believe there's an adequate one in place and I think it is totally inappropriate that it would be suggested that the minister influence the process in this way.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. If you looked at the news clippings today, you would have seen in the Star and the Sun items about the film industry crisis in Toronto. One reads,

"Hollywood Needs Carrot to Film Here, City is Told."

Production firms say tax incentives aren't competitive. Toronto may lose place as 'preferred destination.'"

I raised this question with my colleagues last week and I'm going to tell you again what's at stake here. Over 50,000 jobs depend on the industry. Most of these jobs are located in Toronto and most of the film studios are right in my riding. This is a crisis happening in jobs in my riding. The industry stopped growing in absolute terms four years ago, and according to your government's own Ontario Media Development Corp, foreign projects filming in Ontario declined a stunning 36% in 2003.

Minister, I'm going to ask you today, what is your government planning to do to reverse the decline in foreign television and film productions in Ontario?

1510

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the Premier has commented on this several times. First, to restate what he has said, that's to tell the film industry and indeed the public of Ontario that we fully understand the importance of this industry. It is an important industry for Ontario. We have an enormous infrastructure developed around it. It brings a lot of jobs to the province of Ontario, there's no doubt, and the Premier has been crystal clear on that.

The Premier has also indicated, during the campaign, the commitments that we've made. We intend to honour those commitments. We've said that we will deal with this over our mandate, and we will do that. This year's budget contains some modest improvements. The Premier has indicated that over the four years of our mandate we will do exactly what we said we would do in our campaign commitment. I think that will be of significance to the Ontario film industry.

Ms Churley: I guess that was a more positive answer than I got from the finance minister the other day. But I would say this to you: You promised during the election that you would increase the tax credits to the film industry. That's what you promised. The film industry can't wait over the mandate of four years to get this increase. They need it now. Other jurisdictions have been cutting into Ontario's share with higher tax credits.

In an article that appeared today in the Toronto Star, Ken Ferguson is quoted as saying he is reconsidering building a major film and media complex in the port lands in my riding, partially because of provincial policies toward film. Mayor David Miller has also come out saying that more needs to be done on the tax credit.

Minister, I've spoken with the finance minister, who at least has now agreed to meet with the film industry. That's a positive move forward. Will you commit today to keep the promise that you made in the election to give the film industry this increased tax credit, and do it immediately so that they do not continue to lose their market share?

Hon Mr Phillips: I'd say what I said earlier in my first comments, and that is, I fully appreciate and understand the importance of the industry, and we've made commitments which we will honour during our mandate.

I also would say to all of us, we're all dealing with a fiscal reality that the province cannot do everything in the first year. What the Minister of Finance has said is that we must ensure that if we want to guarantee long-term economic well-being in Ontario, we have to do things in the health care and the education areas, but we also must make absolutely certain that we have our fiscal house in order.

We'll do that. We will deliver on the commitment we made to the film industry. We'll do it in a way that ensures that we indeed get our fiscal house in order. My judgment is, if you want to know what perhaps provides the most important long-term economic well-being, it could very well be that.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. A blockade of six lumber mills in Timmins and Cochrane—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The member from Toronto-Danforth, will you just come to order, please?

Member from Thunder Bay-Superior North, would you start the question again.

Mr Gravelle: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. A blockade of six lumber mills in Timmins and Cochrane by independent truckers has been ongoing for two weeks now. The driving issue behind the blockade is how much the truckers are being paid by the harvesting contractors to haul logs from the bush to the lumber mills. Unfortunately, this blockade has already started to slow the flow of lumber and its by-products from the mills. As a result, mills are preparing to lay off workers because they don't have a large enough supply of logs to keep running. While I understand that the Ministry of Natural Resources doesn't have a direct role in the dispute, can you tell the Legislature what you've done to help resolve the situation?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): As with the local member, it has been a big concern for

all of us to see this action take place. As the member correctly points out, this has been an action not involving the government but between companies, contractors and independent truckers who haul the logs into the mills, and it's starting to have an impact on the sawmills in northeastern Ontario.

On Tuesday, I asked my parliamentary assistant, Michael Brown, MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin, to go to Timmins as a fact-finder, to start to sit down with the truckers and the companies. He had a very successful day doing that yesterday, and he has already reported back to me today with some suggestions as to how we can facilitate this. He's going to continue that work.

I am very confident that the companies understand our concern and are working very closely with the independent truckers.

Mr Gravelle: I'm certainly pleased to hear that we're doing everything we can to address this difficult situation.

You mentioned in your response the importance of forestry to the northern economy. You know as well as anyone that forestry is the main driver behind the northern economy and a huge contributor to Ontario's overall economic prosperity. Ontario's forest industry employs about 80,000 workers and generates annual sales of \$18 billion. More than half of its sales are exports, principally to the United States, and almost 50 communities in northern Ontario, many in my constituency, are heavily dependent on the forestry sector to sustain their economies. As Minister of Natural Resources, could you tell the House what you're doing to ensure that the forestry industry deals with the difficult challenges it's facing and remains strong into the future?

Hon Mr Ramsay: I do have an answer for the member opposite. This morning in Thunder Bay, I announced the establishment of a minister's council on forest sector productivity. This council is comprised of the top CEOs of the major forest companies that do business in Ontario, municipal representation and two of the main union reps who head the unions involved in the wood products industry in this province. Also, I've asked First Nation communities that have forest product industries in their communities to be part of this. We all know the incredible challenges the industry faces right now, whether it's the softwood tariff dispute with the United States, all the other costs or the rising Canadian dollar. I know they have ideas about how government can help them. I expect to have an action plan in place by April of next year so we can help the industry be more productive.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to ask a question of the Acting Premier, who is also the Chair of Management Board and the minister responsible for the Ontario Realty Corp. You promised the working group that is trying to help save the Frost Centre that the Ontario Realty Corp would not be moving or selling anything that is still at the Frost Centre. Last night, one of my constituents was driving by the Frost

Centre and was surprised to see a couple of workmen who identified themselves as being with the ORC. These workmen were removing the Frost Centre sign.

What kind of signal are you sending to the working group? What sort of signal are you sending to the people who have been trying to keep the Frost programs alive? Minister, will you keep your word? Will you put the sign back up?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): That's a good question. I would just say to the residents of Haliburton—and I'm there many weekends, so I have to handle this very carefully—that the policy of the ORC is that when a building is declared surplus, they take the sign down and store it. So they're following policy. I don't fault them, but in this particular case, I don't think it's a good idea. I'm not faulting the ORC, but I think the sign should stay up. They were following policy, but this is a unique circumstance. I'm going up there, perhaps this weekend, so I want to make sure the sign is back up.

1520

Ms Scott: Thank you, Minister. I'm sure that you will drive by when you travel up there this weekend.

The sign has tremendous symbolic significance. It has long remained up there, and it has weathered many a winter. Could you please tell us when the sign will go back up?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Bring your hammer.

Hon Mr Phillips: There is a community group of terrific volunteers working on this, trying to finding what's called a financially viable, locally driven solution, and I'm anxious to see that happen.

I assume that those workpeople kept the nails and that we can get it back up fairly quickly—certainly by the weekend, I would hope.

I'm not faulting our officials for doing it; they were following policy. But in this case I think there's a unique relationship with this facility. I'll even bring my hammer up there, if need be, for the weekend.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to say to the Chair of Management Board that the golf course at Blairhampton is closed at this time of year.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): To the minister: I'm sure that all our sign crews have nothing to do right now, so you can put them to work.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, you will know that a number of people in your ministry have been advocating map staking for years. To explain it to members of this Legislature, what that basically means is that if we move to a map staking situation, large mining companies would be able to sit in their boardrooms down on Bay Street and decide which claim they want to bring in for their own company,

putting out of work local prospectors and people in the mining industry who work on the ground in the bush in northern Ontario.

You will know that there is a huge campaign going on right now in northern Ontario. Whereas major companies had said there was no gold to be found at Hemlo, Don McKinnon, an individual prospector, went in the bush with John Larche and found the largest gold deposit in Ontario in a very long time. Now Mr McKinnon is heading up a campaign asking you to say no to map staking and to say no to those people in your ministry who are advocating that. Are you prepared today in this House to say, "No. There will be no map staking in northern Ontario"?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Thank you for the question. Do you know what? This is a huge, huge, contentious issue. Clearly, the Mining Act advisory committee is looking at the pros and cons with regards to map selection and map staking. Clearly, there is a difference of opinion between the PDAC and the OPA, the group of prospectors in Timmins that advocates against it. In direct answer to your question, at this point in time there is absolutely no consideration being given to map staking in northern Ontario.

Mr Bisson: I've got the supplementary; I may as well use it. I don't know how to take "yes" for an answer.

I just want to make sure that we both understand each other and we're both very clear. At this point you're saying there will be no map staking, but will you commit that in the life of this government you will not go to map staking anywhere in northern Ontario?

Hon Mr Bartolucci: To the member or to the industry, I'm not going to do that. What I am going to commit to is to ensure that the reports and the studies that are going to be brought back from the Mining Act advisory committee will be studied very, very carefully. They will be shared with my critic in the third party, because I think that's important as well.

I want to reinforce that at this point in time, there is no intention to move to map staking in northern Ontario.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Minister, last week, our government launched Consumer Awareness Week to educate consumers about their rights, protections and responsibilities in the marketplace. As part of the message communicated to the public, you discussed the growing issue of identity theft, which has also been highlighted in the media in recent months. For example, as reported by the *Globe and Mail*, in March of this year a massive identity theft occurred involving over 1,400 citizens. These files were stolen from the largest credit bureau in Canada, Equifax. According to the Attorney General, identity theft is at a record high and increasing at an alarming rate. What steps should consumers take, and what measures should our government

implement, to ensure that consumers don't fall prey to theft or fraud?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): That's the best question I've heard from a member from Toronto today. I want to thank the honourable member for Davenport. He has expressed a great interest in what is commonly known as the fastest-growing crime in North America, that being identity theft.

Members of the House may remember that in March we launched a new program called Keep Your Identity Safe. Because new Canadians are often victims of identity theft, we've distributed a brochure and a communications campaign in eight different languages, which advises individuals how they should take action, first, to protect themselves from identity theft, and secondly, if they are victims of identity theft, how to go about reporting it.

We've also introduced an on-line identity theft statement that can save precious time when an individual has had credit cards or their identity stolen. I'm very proud of the work the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services has provided. I look forward to the honourable member's supplementary.

Mr Ruprecht: I really appreciate that answer—

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: Speaker, I can't ask my—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Member for Davenport, if you have a supplementary, please present it.

Mr Ruprecht: I have another very serious question, actually, if you could all pay attention to this.

I have received complaints from some of my constituents who are concerned about inaccurate information on their individual credit files—you may check your own credit file. This incorrect information greatly affects their ability to apply for credit cards and purchase consumer goods—even for routine banking. Literally thousands of Canadians are denied credit due to erroneous, derogatory information on their files with the credit bureau. In fact, a major study was done by the Consumer Federation of America in 2003. Over half a million people were surveyed, and guess what they found? They found that erroneous information was on the credit files of more than 47% of the people who were surveyed.

What protection do consumers have to ensure that inaccuracies on credit files are verified by the consumer and changed promptly by credit agencies?

Hon Jim Watson: The member has been very persistent in dealing with the issue of credit reports. As individuals of the House may be aware, and if they're not, the federal legislation, PIPEDA, the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, requires that credit reporting agencies must make corrections to mistakes identified in credit reports within 30 days of the request. That's the law. Consumers have this right. They also may contact the registrar of consumer reporting in my ministry.

The member is quite correct: Individuals should, on a regular basis, check their credit rating. It can be done free

of charge via mail. The information is available on our Web site, at cbs.gov.on.ca. A number of articles have been written about this—Linda Leatherdale in the Sun and Ellen Roseman in the Toronto Star—urging individuals to contact their credit rating agencies to ensure that the information is correct, because that will affect one's credit history.

1530

PETITIONS

PER DIEM FUNDED AGENCIES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over 4,000 vulnerable children, youth and adults are provided with high-quality services in residential care and treatment homes in the province of Ontario, including those individuals who are medically fragile, developmentally handicapped, autistic, physically abused, neglected, conduct-disordered, young offenders and emotionally disturbed; and

"Whereas over 4,000 child and youth workers are dedicated in their profession to work with vulnerable children, youth and adults in the provision of an accepting, safe, supportive, therapeutic environment; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget promised \$38 million to children's mental health services or otherwise a 3% operational increase to those agencies who have not received an increase in several years; and

"Whereas the government" of Dalton McGuinty "has excluded the 93 agencies and more who serve this vulnerable population under a funding structure referred to as 'per diem funded agencies'; and

"Whereas, by excluding these children of the province and the dedicated staff who serve them from the 3% increase promised in the 2004 budget, agencies will close down, thereby handicapping government with respect to the delivery of service and costing the government far more by placing those hard-to-serve clients in more costly facilities,

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario do the right thing, help and assist the lives of the many, many vulnerable people in Ontario and include per diem agencies (Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth) in the 2004-05 provincial budget. Keep your promise and commit to the 3% increase in staff and client funding. The Parliament of Ontario should recognize that the clients and staff are all citizens of Ontario and should not be penalized by virtue of where they reside or where they may be placed" in our province.

I've attached my signature of support as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by thousands of Ontarians. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with these petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Portuguese Canadians number 171,545 in the Toronto census metropolitan area, many of whom encounter serious barriers (language, culture, and location) to accessing community and long-term services; and

"There are no long-term-care homes dedicated to the needs of Portuguese Canadian seniors; and

"Camões House for the Aged and Portuguese Community Centre of Toronto is proposing a partnership with a local long-term-care provider to purchase up to 160 existing beds in the Toronto area (for a nominal fee), to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto. This partnership is tentative and is dependent on the approval of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We encourage the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, his staff, and members of the Legislature to support the Camões proposal, and to make the appropriate administrative and policy changes required to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto."

Since I agree with this petition 100%, I'm delighted to put my name to it.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August, the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York Region District Health Council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the

May 18, 2004, provincial budget, and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with this petition and affix my name thereon.

PIT BULLS

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On behalf of my constituents of Thornhill and Concord, I present today a petition requesting that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation. The petition reads:

"Whereas,

"Aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ... implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock):

"Save the Frost Centre

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre has a long history in the county of Haliburton and provides an important historical link dating back to its use in 1921 as a chief ranger station; and

"Whereas the history in the use and management of natural resources in Ontario stretches back to the 1600s and forms an integral part of the overall history of the province and MNR. The history of the ministry and the Frost Centre itself easily qualify as a significant historic resource; and

"Whereas the Minister of Culture, Madeleine Meilleur, has said, 'The McGuinty government values and is committed to conserving Ontario's heritage for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations'; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is an important educational resource for the community, being described on the Ministry of Natural Resources Web site as 'Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre'; and

"Whereas closure of the Frost Centre would cause economic hardship in the local communities of the county of Haliburton and district of Muskoka due to direct job losses and loss of tourism dollars spent in local communities; and

"Whereas the local community has not been consulted about the closure plans;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should not close the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre."

It's signed by thousands of people, and I attach my signature to it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of my riding.

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school and community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned," request "that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

1540

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that pro-

pects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

This was sent to me by a number of my constituents in Wellesley township, and of course I support it as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and...

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

I will sign this one.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York

region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I affix my signature to this petition.

TAXATION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Hands Off Our Wallets

"Whereas the Liberal Premier McGuinty promised as part of his election platform that he would not raise taxes; and

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal budget on May 18 imposes an increase of income tax ranging from \$300 to \$900 per person, in addition to a \$3.9-billion electricity rate hike; and

"Whereas false promises of Liberal Premier McGuinty adversely affect the trust between Ontarians and their elected representatives;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"We petition that the Liberal Premier keep his promise and immediately agree not to impose higher taxes."

I am pleased to join my fellow Cambrians in signing this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising / Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My understanding is that I have not even a full two minutes left in my debate on this issue.

As I was mentioning back on October 26, I think that people would generally think the bill is headed in the right direction. The issue becomes, once again, the government's lack of a fulsome bill covering off the issues of government advertising. Quite frankly, we in this party have affectionately referred to it as the Mack truck legislation: a bill that has so many loopholes in it that you could drive a Mack truck through the loopholes.

Quite frankly, it's not enough. It's certainly a beginning, but Bill 25 needs to have a lot more work done on it. It needs to have, I think, a lot more attention to the details, and it doesn't go far enough in addressing the fact that people are quite fed up with the use of taxpayers' dollars for advertising—quite frankly, partisan advertising—by governments. It's simply inappropriate. It shouldn't be done.

Interjections.

Ms Horwath: This bill, unfortunately, as my friend from Niagara Centre, Mr Kormos, is indicating, is just another Liberal broken promise. It doesn't make the grade. It doesn't deliver on the promise that was made to deal with this quite horrible practice of advertising partisan politics through taxpayer money.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to address Bill 25. I certainly can remember, when I was campaigning for six months, how the public would tell me they'd watch television and see the ads, or the pamphlets being put out by the Tory government, that weren't for the purpose of educating the public on services being provided by the government but really were designed for partisan advertising. One of the commitments I made was that that would be something I would certainly be bringing forward once I was elected. Of course, the government has committed to that.

I can still remember, one evening when I was campaigning, someone asking me to come into the house. There was a television ad running. I sat with this couple and watched the ad. It was one of these partisan ads that the previous government ran. The person I was sitting with was a former editor of one of the largest newspapers in our community—he had retired—and he was very clear and concise that this had to stop.

I'm really pleased that Bill 25 is designed and committed to eliminating partisan advertising. It's a good step. There was nothing that existed before; no government has ever taken this initiative. It's easy to criticize it, saying it's not enough and not the right thing, but someone has to take the lead. We have, and we're going in the right direction with it.

It will save money, which will be spent for hospitals, schools and the things that people in all the communities across Ontario want it to be spent for. That's what the bill will lead us toward. It's in line with the throne speech, where we made that commitment, and we're sticking to it.

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity, for the past two minutes, to speak on this bill and share with the people of Ontario where we're going with it.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): This bill was introduced by this party some two months ago, I think, and between the time of introduction and now, the government produced a very, very political piece with taxpayers' money. We stood in this Legislature and asked them to live by the legislation they had laid on the table. Everybody on the opposition side thought it was only fair that the Liberal Party pay for that piece of Liberal propaganda.

We've heard about a government that goes about the province and talks about democratic renewal and reform. Yet what we have, in fact, is a government that is practising something it does not preach.

We welcome getting this government into this stage of our legislative process, because we want it passed. We would have liked the Liberal government to give their latest rag of advertising, which they presented to the people as a government piece—we would have liked to have the auditor review that and hear his comments on it. We asked in this Legislature, "Premier McGuinty, take that piece as though the legislation had already been passed, give it to the auditor and ask him what his advice is with regard to whether or not this was a partisan piece of advertising." What did we hear back? Nothing. They thought they could get away with it. They have been getting away with it, and they continue to get away with it. So they talk one way and they act another. Disgraceful.

1550

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Once again, Andrea Horwath, New Democrat, member for Hamilton East, with a strong and compelling argument and a careful and thorough analysis of Bill 25, addresses the issue in as capable a way as anybody could in this chamber, as anybody ever has in my experience here. What she's telling you is that this is the Mack truck bill. There are loopholes in here so big you can drive a Mack truck through them, the Electrohaul, the Caterpillar tractor, if you will, if you were so inclined.

This government has no commitment to abandoning partisan advertising. They've demonstrated that over and over again. They've demonstrated that with the publication of glossy magazine pieces so clearly constituting partisan self-promotion on the part of the Liberal caucus and the Liberal Party.

Of course, they're desperate. They've been reading the polls lately, along with Conservatives and New Democrats, and while Conservatives have some reason to be pleased and New Democrats are elated, the Liberals have found themselves pretty cranky about the evaporation of support for them out there in every single part of this province.

New Democrats have been very clear, saying, "Look, send this bill to committee," because there are more than a few folks out there across Ontario who want to tell you that your bill is nothing but a scam, a sham, a fraud. It is flim-flammy of the highest sort; another duping or effort to dupe the people of Ontario. Well, they're hip to your tricks now, friends. Burn them once, shame on you; burn them twice, shame on them. They're not going to get burned twice. People are up to your tricks now. They know what kind of scam artists you are. You guys constitute a consumer rip-off all unto your own selves. This bill is the highlight of that sort of scam.

I'm looking forward to Ms Shelley Martel and her comments on this bill in 30 minutes.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Even the NDP's own caucus is laughing at that last statement.

Let me just say that this legislation is exactly what we said we were going to do in the last election: It's a banning of partisan advertising. The NDP would have us throw a blanket over communications throughout the entire province. That would be doing nobody any justice. We have to communicate with people. We are doing a lot of good things, we're bringing a lot of good change to this province, and it's important that people know what their government is doing. That's not partisan advertising, that's just informing people, and I think it's extremely important that we do that.

We're transforming this health care system. We're bringing in more nurses. We're improving primary care. We're reducing waiting lists. We're doing all kinds of things in the health care system. We're providing more community-based services, like home care. We're investing in all the right things in health care, and we are making progress. The people of this province, as they see this service going through this transition, deserve to know what we're doing, where it's at and how it's going.

It's the same with education. We're seeing improvements in education and class sizes. We're already seeing improvements in results. We're seeing some of the schools across this province being fixed up.

The people of Ontario have a right to know what's being done with their taxpayer dollars. We're improving the mess that we inherited from the Tories. We're working very hard to get that deficit down, and as we saw in the recent financial statement, that deficit is coming down. It's through the hard work of this caucus and this government that that's happening, and the people of Ontario deserve to know that.

We don't want to be saying that in a partisan way. We don't want to be putting that out, where the Premier's or the ministers' pictures are on every single publication that goes out, but the information has to flow out in some way. You can't put a blanket over information coming out of Queen's Park. People have a right to know.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has two minutes to reply.

Ms Horwath: I'm pleased to respond to the questions and comments provided by the member from Niagara Falls, the member from Lanark county, the member for Niagara Centre and the member from Scarborough Centre. I think it's really apparent that there are always improvements that can be made. Certainly, some that have been suggested were in fact part of legislation that was tabled by my good friend and colleague Peter Kormos from Niagara Centre in previous times, I believe a couple of years ago. They included things like really specific guidelines around what is acceptable and what isn't, so that it's not just a matter of someone's opinion but that really strict guidelines exist.

It's a matter of value for money. It's not just a matter of whether or not the advertising is partisan but of where the value is in that advertising. Where is the dollar value? Is it appropriate to spend the money, based on what the piece of advertisement actually is and what effect it will have and whether or not it will actually be valuable to the

people of Ontario to spend that money on that particular piece of advertising?

In fact, there are a number of parts of this bill that need to be fleshed out a little bit more, that need to be more inclusive of specifics as well as of different yardsticks to measure whether or not the particular piece, whether it's a print, radio or television piece, is in fact an effective use of taxpayers' money—not just whether or not it's partisan, but whether or not it is a valuable piece of information that needs to have advertising dollars attached to it.

Quite frankly, I do appreciate the comments of the members here. However, I believe that this bill will get an excellent airing in committee. It needs to have some further details ironed out. I look forward to that further discussion happening both today and in the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: You two can sort it out however you want, but the member for Simcoe North has the floor.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Now I'm informed that you have already spoken on this bill, so I will call for further debate. The member for Lanark-Carleton.

Mr Sterling: Things are happening so slowly in this Legislature that some members can't remember whether they're on second or third reading debate because the government fails to call bills dealing with democratic reform. They introduced a rash of these bills at the beginning, and then they haven't called them.

I suspect it's because they don't want to live within any new rules in this place. They want to go out and tell the world, "We're all for change." So what do they do? They bring in this bill—I think it was the first bill—about cabinet ministers' attendance in this place. They were to get fined \$500 if Dalton McGuinty thought they were away without a proper excuse, like the kind of system we have running in our elementary schools, where you have to bring a note to your teacher if in fact you were absent, to prove that you were away with the boss's, the principal's, approval.

So goes the promise that there was going to be more independence in this place. We instead had the Premier with one of his first democratic bills say, "I'm going to keep a record." We haven't seen the record. We haven't had any indication from the Premier whether he has fined anybody this \$500 per day. Or maybe he's treating it like all his other democratic renewal bills, that they just put them in front of the Legislature but they have no intent of living within even what I would call an abysmal policy of democratic reform.

Then we had the bill coming forward with regard to a fixed election date. Even the commentators are now saying that the bill is really specious; it doesn't have any legal effect. It's in some ways against the principles of

our Constitution, and the Premier has every right to walk down the hall to the Lieutenant Governor today, tomorrow, any day from now until five years from October 2, 2003, to call the election.

1600

Essentially we have a bill that says the Liberal government is going to promise to have an election on October 4. It's nothing more than a promise, and we know, of course, what Liberals do with promises: They break more than they keep.

Then we have this bill, which, as all of these other bills have, has tremendous opportunities for the government to break it. We have Bill 84, which is the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which essentially says that the government is going to have the auditor do an audit before the next election, but in that bill, as in this bill, the Premier basically can walk away from it if he so chooses. It essentially says that the Premier should do this, but if he doesn't want to do it, he doesn't have to do it.

What kind of responsibility, what kind of legislation is this stuff? There is no penalty. There is no real obligation in law for the Premier or this government to act in any other way than they want to.

Then we come down to this bill, Bill 25. Bill 25 is a bill that requires the government to place any brochure it's sending out to the auditor for him to have a look at, to see if it's partisan or not partisan. This bill was introduced, I believe, two or three months ago; maybe it was even introduced in June. It's so long ago that I've forgotten when they introduced it. It was in the spring.

We've seen little indication on the part of the government that they really want to call this legislation, because once the bill is passed and receives royal assent—probably this bill has a proclamation section in it. I haven't looked at it that closely, but if it has a proclamation section in it, they'll probably proclaim the bill just prior to the next election and claim this as one of their wonderful pieces of democratic renewal, that they in fact didn't follow.

Part of the problem with this particular bill is not only how phony it is, but the fact that it will cause a tremendous problem in running the government of Ontario, and an unneeded expense with regard to what will happen in the government of Ontario. Probably they will use this bill to forestall the publication of real information to the people of Ontario, because what they will do is say, "We submitted this, along with a thousand other pieces, to the auditor this week, and he can't have a look at it for three or four months to approve it so that we can use this." Effectively what the government will do is use this as a stalling method to produce pertinent information to the public of Ontario and the opposition members of this Legislature.

When you look at the titles of these bills and you hear what the so-called intent of the government is on these bills, I can see that people who are less engaged in these matters than us would say, "Hey, this looks kind of good. They're going to really stop partisan advertising." Don't hold your breath.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): They can do it in Buffalo.

Mr Sterling: As my good friend from Nepean-Carleton, a very perceptive young member of this Legislature, points out, you can go to a Buffalo TV station and put your ad on there, because there's no jurisdiction in this Legislature with regard to that advertising medium.

I guess the worst part of this government and all of their chitter chatter about democratic renewal, showing how much they lack depth on it, relates to their production of this glossy book talking about how wonderful this government has been over the past year. It is clearly a partisan book. There's no question for anybody who would read it, because there's not one negative thing that they say in the book. It's all, "We're wonderful, we're wonderful, we're wonderful."

Even though it says, "We're all wonderful," notwithstanding that many in this Legislature and in this province would give this government an F-minus with regard to this past year, the Premier saw this as a B year for how his government reacted to the needs of the people of Ontario.

I've been looking at some of their other democratic renewal reforms. We had this announcement this week—and we're going to be debating it a little bit tomorrow—with regard to the creation of a citizens' assembly to look at the election method of our province of Ontario. I won't deny that we should look at these matters, but basically what Premier McGuinty and the Liberal government have done is say, "This isn't an issue for all elected representatives in the province of Ontario. This is an issue for us, the Liberal Party. And I, King Dalton, and all my merry men will make the decision for the next hundred years on how people are going to be elected in this place." We haven't seen the government bring forward a motion. We haven't seen them bring forward a piece of legislation that involves the members of the Legislative Assembly.

I'm certain that all members of this Legislative Assembly would agree to the engagement of a committee of citizens, if properly selected. They would agree that they have some defined duty and there would be some method of their reporting to the people of Ontario and this Legislative Assembly. But we have been totally excluded from that debate. How democratic is that? I mean, this is just a joke. The Liberal Party have decided on their own what result they would like in the end. They have put us on an irrevocable path toward a proportional representation model for voting in the province of Ontario.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Not true.

Mr Sterling: Ted McMeekin, you know that that's what's going to happen. The human nature of people who are asked to engage in a reform move will probably take a very radical approach to the reform of this place, without understanding, perhaps, what actually happens after people get voted into this place.

You won't find a member of this Legislature who wouldn't plug for reform of this place, but it has to be an

all-encompassing debate. It has to be a motion that goes out, a bill that goes out, with the universal approval of all parties of this Legislature. This government is acting in a most undemocratic way toward all of these so-called democratic reform initiatives.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments made by the member from Lanark-Carleton, let me just reinforce the comment that he made with respect to the lack of penalties in the bill.

Look, the government proposes that they will send to the Provincial Auditor advertising that they intend to undertake—advertising defined as any items designed to appear on television, radio, billboards and print, as well as print material the government would have to distribute to households via bulk mail—and, under the process put forward by the government, any of the advertising that is deemed to be partisan by the Provincial Auditor or by his appointed designate would not proceed.

Now, I'm sure I stand to be corrected, but I don't recall that there are penalties in the bill if the government decides to ignore what the Provincial Auditor or his designate says with respect to this matter. For example, if they say, "It is partisan, and you shouldn't be putting it out," I don't think there are penalties listed in the bill to deal with that.

The reason I raise this is that it's all well and good to send this to an officer of the House, whom all of us respect, and ask him to do his job, but if the government can ignore, willy-nilly, what the Provincial Auditor has to say anyway and there is no penalty for doing that, what's the point? Why waste the Provincial Auditor's time? Why waste the time of his designate? Why bother to do this at all if, at the end of the day, there really isn't any way to stop the government from doing what it wants to do anyway? If this were going to have any kind of teeth at all, one would have thought that the government would come forward with some kind of penalties if they do what they're not supposed to do. That's not in the bill. There's not an enforcement mechanism, there are no penalties, and frankly, they're just going to do what they want to do anyway.

1610

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured to stand up and speak in support of Bill 25, banning advertisements using taxpayers' money to promote partisan issues. I was listening carefully to the member for Lanark-Carleton when he was talking about the government approach to this issue. If we didn't believe in that important issue, why would we introduce it?

I believe it is our commitment to the people of this province to protect every penny, every taxpayer's dollar, to spend it on important issues like education, health care etc. But sometimes, as a ministry, as a government, you have to send a message to the people of this province concerning health care, education, the environment or agriculture. You have to use some kind of mechanism, whether it's the papers, a magazine, a TV ad, billboards or whatever media, to inform the people of this province. I believe it's necessary.

The member for Lanark-Carleton was speaking about using outside-the-border advertising media. This question was asked of the Chair of Management Board before. He was clear about it and said, "We're not going to use inside or outside media to promote our cause by using taxpayers' money." If we want to do any advertising of party issues, it's got to be from the party. But, for the people of this province, the money is going to be used only for promoting the people of this province.

Mr Baird: I found the speech by the member for Lanark-Carleton to be on the point. It shows why he's been so successful in being elected to this chamber in eight successive general elections.

I am shocked that the member opposite didn't mention the Mack truck clause in this bill. They used to criticize the previous government for having the Premier go on economic development television ads on Detroit television, which goes into Ottawa, Windsor and southwestern Ontario, or on Buffalo TV, which goes into the GTA and the Golden Horseshoe. This bill allows it.

I think one of the Liberal members opposite called it the crack cocaine of government advertising, but it's legal in this bill.

Interjection: It was Jim Bradley.

Mr Baird: My colleague says it was Jim Bradley who might have said that.

But that will continue to happen, because Dalton McGuinty doesn't keep his promises.

I said on election night that I would stand in my place and congratulate the government when they did something good. I want to congratulate Gerry Phillips. I brought an example, the last time we debated this six or eight months ago, about how he and his public servants were, in a partisan tack on his own piece of legislation, putting all sorts of glossy pictures of the Premier and his ministers in the government newsletter. They said, "No, that doesn't count." Well, I've been watching, and I say to the people in the communications branch over at Management Board, you've been doing a good job, because I haven't caught any breaking of the law since they introduced this bill. They were flouting the law, flouting their own minister, but it's shape-up time over there, and they've done an excellent job and stopped putting glossy pictures of the minister and the cabinet in this brochure. I'm sure the Chair of Management Board was terribly embarrassed by that.

I'd like to ask the member for Lanark-Carleton: When this bill is passed as law, does it immediately come into force? When would he, as a former Attorney General reading this bill, and being an expert legislator, say this bill would come into force?

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

The member for Lanark-Carleton has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Sterling: I guess what is most upsetting about these democratic renewal reforms is that we see such a lack of substance behind any of the initiatives this government has taken to date. It was disturbing to me that while this piece of legislation languished on the floor of

this Legislature, the government would go forward with a clearly partisan piece of advertising, patting themselves on the back for the first year of a disastrous lead into government, patting themselves on the back in this partisan piece. When we asked in the Legislature, would the Premier submit this particular document to the auditor—and I phoned the auditor before we asked this question because I wanted to be consistent and not say, "You didn't do this," if in fact they did it. I asked the auditor's office, "Was this document submitted to you with regard to this, to live within the spirit of this act, even though it hadn't been passed by the Legislature?" That's a measure of whether the government really wants to track this down. The answer was no, they didn't submit it to the auditor. Therefore, we don't have very much confidence in what they say.

The answer to the question with regard to the proclamation of this act is that when it's really supposed to bite, although there's not too much to bite in this legislation, is at the call of—guess who?—Dalton McGuinty. I expect this particular act to be proclaimed on October 3, 2007.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate. Following up on what the member from Lanark-Carleton just said, I suspect you're actually very correct that it will go into law very close to the next election. It probably won't see the light of day until then.

I decided to go back and just have a look at the start of this debate, which was on April 26, 2004. I'm looking at the leadoff speech that started with Gerry Phillips, who said the following: "We believe this groundbreaking legislation is the first of its kind in the world. There is no other legislation like this anywhere else in the world that we've been able to find. So I'm pleased and I think all of the Legislature should recognize that we are really providing leadership in this area to ban partisan" government "advertising."

I looked at Bill 25 and I read what the minister had to say and I've listened a little bit to some of the comments that were made at that time, particularly from government members who were very adamant that the bill is going to provide tough new restrictions on partisan government ads. You just have to pick up the bill to look for the tough new restrictions, and what jumps out at you the most are the big, looming loopholes that allow the government to essentially get out of the promise it made before the election and during the election that it was essentially going to do something to ban political advertising.

Let me deal with just one of those big, looming loopholes. Subsection 6(1) under the standards says the following: "It must not be a 'primary' objective of the item to foster a positive impression," meaning that if the partisan ad, be it radio, television or something in the print media, is put to the auditor, the primary objective cannot be to foster a positive impression because, if the primary objective is that, then it's going to be considered partisan advertising. That's a mealy-mouthed, weaselly word.

If the government were really interested in getting at all political advertising, if the objective were to try and foster an impression—that is, link you to the government, link you to the Premier—then these are the kinds of things that wouldn't be permitted. You see, by the use of "primary," it gets the government off the hook. It suggests that if the auditor thinks it's only a secondary motive or a secondary impression or a tertiary motive or a tertiary impression, then it's OK; it's not partisan advertising after all and it can be allowed. Look, you might as well drive a Mack truck right through that loophole, because that gets the government off the hook. That lets the government go to the Provincial Auditor and say, "Well, it's not our primary objective. It's our secondary, our tertiary, an additional objective."

1620

How many ways do you want to try to get around this? That one loophole alone, that one particular section, section 6 in the standards, makes it really clear that, frankly, the government is not too interested in shutting this down and making sure we don't continue to have money spent on partisan political advertising. If the government were really interested, you wouldn't have a clause like that, you wouldn't have a loophole like that, because that lets the government off the hook.

If they actually do end up proclaiming this law and going to the Provincial Auditor with some of these pamphlets, brochures or advertising in any, way, shape or form, you can bet that the government is going to be saying to the Provincial Auditor, "Look, it's not our primary motivation. Don't consider it to be that. Let us off the hook." That's just one of a couple of loopholes in the bill that makes me really question how serious the government is about doing what it promised to do during and before the last election.

If Bill 25 is really going to ensure that the taxpayers find out how their money is going to be spent—I heard a Liberal backbencher say earlier, "The bill is all about ensuring that Ontarians who have a right to know how their tax dollars are being spent get that information." Do you know what? My question is, do they have a right to know, and is that right to know going to be guaranteed by this bill? The answer is no, because there's nothing that guarantees that getting the information is getting the correct information, the true information.

I look at this glossy little bit of advertising that the government put out. I turn to the health section because I have a particular interest in health matters as the NDP health critic. The first thing I see is that the government says:

"What we've done in our first year

"Three new or expanded MRIs will shorten wait times in the province; an additional six will be operational by 2006." Do you know what? Those MRIs were announced by the former Conservative government. Not only that, but one of those MRIs, the one in Oakville, for example, was up and running as of June 2003, before the last election. But here's the government in the glossy ad telling people that they are responsible for nine new MRIs. Not true.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, that's bordering on a prop. If you want to read from it, OK, continue, but just don't wave it around.

Ms Martel: I'll be careful, Speaker.

The second point I want to raise: "Created a new program to vaccinate children against pneumonia, chicken pox and meningitis." Do you know what's interesting? When the Premier was talking about this on the radio, he said that every single dollar of the health premium would go into new health services, and he referenced this new vaccination program as one of the programs being paid for by the new health tax. That is completely false. In estimates, in October, I asked the Minister of Health, "Where did the money come from to pay for the new vaccination program?" Every single penny, every single dollar for the new vaccination program for the next three years, is federal money, \$150 million worth of federal money. Not a penny is coming from the new health tax. Does this glossy little brochure point out that the money is federal? No, it does not.

The next item: "Funded hospitals to hire up to 1,000 more full-time nurses." Do you know what? I was at the Ontario Nurses' Association reception last night for their biannual convention. Mr Baird was there with me. It was very interesting to have nurses approach both of us to say, "Our hospital got some additional money to hire more nurses"—or, "Our hospital got some additional money to transfer part-time nurses to full-time nurses"—"and now, as a result of this government demanding that our hospital balance its budget, these nurses are going to be laid off." That's what we heard last night at the Ontario Nurses' Association, and that's not in the book either.

Here's another one: "Toughened enforcement of care standards for residents in Ontario nursing homes."

Well, that's a surprise. Let me tell you about the enforcement standards. This government promised it was going to have a registered nurse 24/7 in every long-term-care home in the province. Note that it says "Toughened enforcement," past tense, as if it's already been done.

Do you know that the regulation that forces long-term-care homes to have a full-time nurse 24/7 doesn't even go into effect until January 1, 2005? Do you know that the Liberal government, before the election, promised it was going to have three baths a week for residents in long-term-care homes? Now it's down to two, and that regulation doesn't go into effect until February 2005. Do you know that the government that promised, before the election, they were going to reinstate 2.25 hours of hands-on nursing care for residents in long-term-care homes is the same government that's now not going to do it, and the Minister of Health confirmed that in estimates? How come? How come, in this glossy brochure, it says "Toughened enforcement of care standards" when that's absolutely not true?

So the point I'm making is, do people have a right to know? They sure do. They have a right to know the correct information, the factual information. They also have a right to know what the government hasn't done,

like not keeping its promise to parents of autistic children over the age of six, when this government promised they were going to end the discrimination, and it hasn't. The same government said they were going to stop the clawback of the federal child care benefit, and it hasn't. Those are things the public needs to know too. I guarantee you, Bill 25 is not going to do anything about that.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):

I want to spend a few moments talking about why there is a need for a bill such as Bill 25. I remember, not that long ago really, during the time of the past government that I would go to the mailbox and find brochures from the government of the day. They would be there time and time again. There were so many. There were lots of brochures. I can assure you of that. They were beautifully done and they had photos of our ministers and the Premier, and they were glossy and colourful.

People started to talk about them. They were coming so often in the mailbox that people started to question the point of doing this. They had already started to become cynical about what these brochures were and what they were doing. It got to the point where people started to question what they were costing. Then, at one stage, I noticed that all of a sudden there was the cost of them. Right in the very top corner, it would say, "This brochure cost so many pennies to produce." I knew then that the government was already starting to get a bit sensitive about it, but the fact is they still continued to put them out.

It caused some problems in terms of credibility for the government. People on the streets and people at their mailboxes started to wonder what this was about, whether it was to give facts and information to the citizens, or was just their way of promoting themselves as a government and getting ready for the next election.

A bill such as Bill 25 is a way we can address that kind of situation, so people will again be able to trust the information they get from their government.

1630

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the speech by the member for Nickel Belt. My only comment is, why did she wait until the end of her speech to talk about autistic children? I know this is an issue she cares very passionately about. She used to berate me because I and the previous government refused to extend the full IBI therapy to children over the age of six.

The second-loudest person—

Interjection.

Mr Baird: I refused. I said no. This was an early childhood development program and I said, with great respect, "No, I will not do it."

Over the yelling of the member for Nickel Belt, the person who was the second-loudest yeller on it was the now Minister of Children, Marie Bountrogianni, who promised autistic children she would release this terrible Conservative cap at the age of six, and that you could take her promise to the bank.

People may not like my policy, but I never, ever lied to an autistic child. Never did I lie, or never has the member from Nickel Belt lied, to an autistic child. Nora Whitney, one of the many people who has been a fighter in this issue, who sued me when I was the minister, and who continues to sue this government, has said, "Well, at least you were honest."

Many families were comforted by Dalton McGuinty's promise that he would repeal this discriminatory practice, and voted for Dalton McGuinty and had hope in Dalton McGuinty that he would do it. But he didn't do it. I think—and I'm not accusing any member of this House—anyone who would lie to an autistic child ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): This bill that has been presented here is a bill to raise standards so that taxpayer dollars don't go into partisan advertising. If the opposition would remember, one of the reasons the public was so incensed in the last election was particular to the notion that so many of the taxpayers' dollars were going to putting pictures of ministers and the former Premier in literature that was going across this province. The public is a lot smarter than the opposition credited. Therefore, part of the result of all that partisan advertising was a loss in the election.

A lesson learned from that is that government has to raise its standards, as they apply to itself, and the Provincial Auditor is now going to be charged with defining or interpreting whether or not the government has met the smell test when it comes to this advertising.

I know that the member from Nickel Belt always has, in her stand, a selective interpretation, constantly, when it comes to how she depicts what is being portrayed. Of course the opposition has a role to play, and the role should be to hold the government to account, but in some cases all they want to do is to try to embarrass the government, without substance in their arguments.

Before the next election, we are going to have the auditor look at the books, not do what happened last time, and give actual dollars as to where the financial state of the province is.

Mr Sterling: It really saddens me to hear the pontification of Liberal members of this Legislature talking about people who were in government before misleading the public about what they were doing and what they were saying, when we have a party that made a huge number of promises which, evidently, the only justification for was that they wanted the reins of power and were willing to say anything to get those reins of power.

These Liberal MPPs are talking about honesty and integrity, and they are the worst examples of it. The campaign of the Liberal Party in the last election had no bearing on the way this government was going to take the reins of power and what they were going to do in the future. So the credibility of this government saying, "We are going to clean up our hands by passing this phony piece of legislation"—the public don't believe you. They don't believe anything the Liberal government is saying.

I was in a Santa Claus parade last Friday morning, and you couldn't believe the support there was for me and my

party. My party leader, John Tory, was with me in Kanata, Ontario. We went through the streets. The thumbs up, and the thumbs down for Dalton McGuinty and his bunch of whatever, as they described it to me, even with children around. It was unbelievable.

Public, don't get tricked by this phony piece of legislation. It will be proclaimed a day before the election so they can carry on as they have in the first year and use public money for partisan advertising.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Nickel Belt, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: I'm going to remind members of the Liberal Party in particular what Gerry Phillips said when he introduced this bill: "The bill helps us, among other things, to fulfill a pledge we made to help restore public faith in our democratic institutions and to strengthen our democracy."

Let me tell you something—and I say this very clearly to the member from Sarnia-Lambton—you're darned right it's my job to hold your government accountable. For you to suggest that anything I raised today was without substance, shame on you, especially with respect to autism. I raised autism in particular because I think it is absolutely disgusting that Premier McGuinty, during the last election, wrote a letter to the mother of a five-year-old autistic child and said the following—and I'm quoting from his letter: "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

We are here, well over a year since the last election, and your policy with respect to autistic children is the same as the Conservatives'. The only difference is, the Conservatives never, ever promised that they were going to end the discrimination. They were upfront that they were not going to make any changes with respect to that. Your Premier, on the other hand, had the audacity to go out and troll for votes among families with autistic children and make a promise that it is clear he never had any intention in the world to live up to.

What you are doing with respect to autistic children is immoral. You are fighting them every step of the way. You are fighting families in court, you are fighting families at the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal and you're using my tax dollars to fight those kids when you promised you were going to be different. You're darned right I'm going to hold your government to account, especially on this issue, because what you have done on this issue is disgusting; it's immoral.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I think it's becoming very clear that we, as members of the PC opposition, support any initiative like this if it increases the measure of accountability. The member from Lanark-Carleton just finished relating some of this to the issue of democratic renewal. The member used terms like "integrity" and "honesty." We would support this legislation if it is not only going forward but if it's

actually being used in the context of those kinds of values. From what I have been hearing to date and in the media, the usage of this bill at present is cynical at best.

The bill I'm referring to is Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising. The bill supposedly establishes an independent review of government-based advertising, as the Liberal government has indicated there has been an abuse of the public purse. The issue with this legislation will be how that line is drawn between advertising that does not offend the legislation and advertising that offends it. What I'm suggesting is that the application of those criteria will be subjective at best.

The law has yet to be passed. Perhaps this is the reason for the delay in passing this law, so that other, what I consider partisan, documents can be published and put out across Ontario, touted as government information and communication. We continue to make a case that there is a partisan bent to some of these publications.

1640

This is enabling legislation. The devil is in the details, and it does leave it open for future regulation to be brought in, which, again, could be questionable and could be confused.

This particular piece of legislation hinges on a promise, a Liberal promise: "We will implement the McGuinty bill to ban self-promotional government advertising and authorize the Provincial Auditor to review and approve all government advertising in advance." That was from a document entitled *Government That Works for You*, a Liberal platform document. It's found on page 15.

I certainly have one government document here that I question the colour of. I don't know whether I should hold this up or not, but the colour of this government document is the identical colour of a Liberal partisan document. If it's not really partisan, taxpayer-funded advertising, what is it, if it has the same colour? We hear criteria mentioned across the way: "If it doesn't have the picture of Dalton McGuinty on it, then it's a government document. It's not a partisan document." We beg to differ.

There's a 16-page booklet entitled *Getting Results for Ontario*. It was released by Premier Dalton McGuinty's office on October 18, and it is there to highlight the first year in power. We put forward the position that it does represent some partisan advertising. For example, there is a four-page section on health care, but nary a word about the health tax. I find this passing strange.

This is an expression I hear across the way: the health care premium. Of course, the lexicon switches back and forth between "premium" and "tax." Nothing is written about the health care premium instituted by this government. Nothing is said about the delisting of physiotherapy, optometry and chiropractic services. Along with the health tax, where this government basically has indicated to people, "You pay more," there's no mention of the delisting of those three essential services, a situation where you not only pay more but you get less. The Liberals promised to introduce legislation to bring an end to this kind of taxpayer-funded, partisan approach.

We certainly have heard mention of loopholes. Again, the law isn't passed yet. It has left the door open for these kinds of documents to be brought forward. It is suggested that the government is using a number of loopholes, to use that oft-heard expression, some large enough to drive a Mack truck through.

If the provincial Liberal government is able to get away with this, despite proposed legislation that is supposed to ban this kind of report, this kind of taxpayer-funded, partisan advertising, then I would suggest that this legislation obviously needs more teeth—that could be difficult with enabling legislation—and I would suggest that the people of Ontario look well to the kinds of regulations that will be attached to this bill.

I'm suggesting this kind of report is an update on all the Liberal-identified good things that their government has been doing and includes errors of omission, omitting things for which this government has clearly been criticized, the kind of criticisms that the member for Lanark-Carleton would even hear in a Santa Claus parade—again, delisting of essential services and the health tax.

I made reference to the report *Getting Results for Ontario*, and quite honestly—and I think the television is in colour—I see no difference in the colour between these two documents. I actually see no difference in the colour between the government document and another document that has exactly the same—

The Deputy Speaker: I have to remind the member that we're getting close to using props. I don't mind you reading from a government document, but please keep that in mind.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. Oftentimes, a picture is worth 1,000 words. I would describe that colour as red, but maybe it's more of a brick colour. I honestly can't come up with the words to describe this colour. I've got about four documents here, some are partisan Liberal, some are government documents, and they're all the identical colour. I just have to try to relay that in words to the television viewer.

We know the Provincial Auditor will screen all proposed government advertising, and partisan government ads would be banned under this legislation. Obviously, the auditor has not screened these documents. We know the rules are intended to apply to all print, television, radio and billboard ads, as well as printed brochures that have been sent out to homes.

During the tenure of the previous government, a number of brochures were sent out to homes. One thing I appreciated in that distribution was the unit cost of each brochure was indicated on one of the corners of the document so the taxpayer would know exactly the unit cost. I think that included not only the cost of writing it, printing it and distributing it; it would include the distribution or postage cost as well. That was quite a transparent approach.

Again, looking at the Liberal documents and the government documents here, I see no indication of what they cost. Perhaps once this legislation is passed we can

only hope—I don't mean to be cynical—that we won't have these kinds of loopholes.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I want to focus on the one particular loophole that was noted by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. It is in section 6. I think it needs to be reinforced again. Section 5 sets out the requirement to the auditor to determine if an item meets the standards required by the act; that is, is the item partisan or non-partisan? Section 6 sets out the standards or the tests or the criteria that have to be met in order for the Provincial Auditor to determine if indeed an item is non-partisan.

Subsection 6(5) says the following: "It," being the item, "must not be a primary objective of the item to foster a positive impression of the governing party or a negative impression of a person or entity who is critical of the government."

The point that I raised before and that I'm going to raise again is that I don't know why the government is using the words "primary objective." It seems to me that maybe part of the point of using that is to be able to then say to the auditor, "It's not our primary purpose, it is our secondary purpose," or an additional purpose; an ad-joined purpose or a tertiary purpose. Either it's a purpose or it's not, either it's an objective or it's not. To try to qualify it by saying "primary" just leads me to think the government is using that word in order to give an out to the Provincial Auditor, who might very well determine that there certainly is an objective of the piece to foster a negative impression of the governing party or somebody else, but since it's not the primary, the first goal, the first objective or the first purpose, then the piece is okay.

This raises the question of the loopholes that are in this legislation. I think that it's very clear that we are going to need public hearings, because if you look at that loophole it's hard to imagine that this legislation can be enforced at all.

1650

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's a pleasure to comment for two minutes on this bill. It's part of a long list of measures that have been brought forward by this government, not only to improve the basic services in our province but also to answer some pretty basic questions the people of Ontario have about the way government operates.

I've had so many people who have come to me and said, "Why don't governments ask the Provincial Auditor to take a look at their books just before an election?" And do you know what? There is no good answer for that, which is why we've introduced legislation that will have the Provincial Auditor take that sort of measure.

Another question people ask is about election dates themselves: "Why do governments virtually shut down at the end of the third year, waiting for the right poll or the right focus group in order to call an election?" The simple fact is that, again, there's not a good answer to that, which is why we've put forward legislation that will see a fixed election day and an electoral cycle that makes sense, an electoral cycle that's workable.

Why is the Provincial Auditor limited from looking at areas like universities, colleges and other institutions that receive government grants? Why has the Provincial Auditor not been able to go in and do value-for-money audits? Again, there is no good answer to that, which is why this government has put forward legislation that will allow that to happen.

Finally, and I could go on, many people have asked me why we have governments that insist upon sending out pamphlets and other literature and advertising to the people of Ontario saying what a wonderful, magnificent job they've done in areas like health care and education. Why don't governments simply take that money and put it into health care and education? Once again, there is no good answer to that question, which is why we've introduced legislation that is going to outlaw that type of partisan advertising, which brought about so much cynicism, when it came to the previous government. That's why we're doing it.

Mr Sterling: It would be nice if we were dealing with a real piece of legislation, but this piece of legislation is so thin in content. It doesn't have any penalties, nor do any of the other democratic renewal pieces of legislation.

We had some questions put by the previous member about what the public was asking, and why doesn't the government do this and why doesn't the government do that. I have a question that I get every weekend when I go back to my riding, every day when I talk to people here, there and everywhere. The question is, "Why do the politicians not have to keep their word that they gave to us before the election?"

Why don't we have a piece of legislation that would monetarily disadvantage governments that lied? Why wouldn't we have a piece of legislation that said, "You gained power by not telling us what you are going to provide us with"? Why don't we have a piece of legislation that would fine Mr McGuinty for standing up in front of the public and saying, "We will not tax you"? That's what he said to the average citizen. What did he do? In the first two months he broke his word. I have to tell you, they're asking that question a lot more than the questions about government advertising or any of those other kinds of issues.

This legislation doesn't surprise me, because this government is thin on integrity in terms of what they say they're going to do and what they actually do. What they've done here is sort of a thin, veiled piece of legislation that says it's going to do something that it's not going to do. It's not going to deal with the advertising issue at all.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It's a pleasure to rise and talk about the speech made by Mr Barrett. I think he hit it in a nutshell. We have a piece of legislation here that at first blush most politicians would agree with. I know certainly when it was entered into the House, at first blush, we all thought, "Thank goodness there's going to be some rein put upon the gratuitous government advertising we witnessed from the previous government." I will even tell you, it was probably

witnessed from the NDP government as well. We did. I wasn't there, but it happened, and with the Peterson government before that. You can go back to the Miller government before that. Everybody did this gratuitous advertising that tried to make themselves look good. At first blush, I looked down this list, and I thought, "What a good thing this is going to be," until—and Mr Barrett said this very well—you get to sections 5 and 6 and you see the loopholes that exist, and then you look at those loopholes in terms of what the government has already done in terms of their advertising.

When I saw this little booklet called *Getting Results* for Ontario, I must tell you that I was somewhat shocked in view of what this bill had promised. It caused me a great deal of concern, enough concern that I have turned around and have started to look in depth and in detail at what is contained in Bill 26, not just surmising, as was said so eloquently in this House, that it's going to put an end to gratuitous advertising, which I had a supreme hope would actually happen. It is the reality that section 6 is not being adhered to by this government, even as they are proposing this bill and even as it is before this House.

I will have an opportunity to speak and I will expand on that in due course.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has up to two minutes.

Mr Barrett: I thank the members for their comments. I continue to question the sincerity of this bill, the government advertising bill, Bill 25. I will continue to do further research.

During Remembrance Day week, I noticed a number of government ads for the licence plates for our veterans, and I certainly hope there was no subliminal message there. It was an Ontario government ad. I took that on good faith. It's an excellent idea for our veterans to have licence plates. That was very heavily advertised. I hope there was no direction there to unfairly boost the Liberals in Ontario.

I say that because it is no secret that people are losing faith in their institutions. Government is at the top of the list of institutions that people would like to see changed. They'd like to see the kind of changes that the member for Lanark-Carleton is working on with respect to democratic renewal. A number of members—I guess four members now—have introduced legislation on recall. Very recently, Jim Flaherty introduced a law to recall members.

I made mention of the criticism of the *Getting Results* for Ontario document. The health section makes no mention of the health tax and doesn't talk about the delisting of essential health services. Some of that information came from the *St Catharines Standard*, a Niagara newspaper. It was titled "Liberal Booklet Dismissed as Propaganda," written by Calvin Reid, an excellent reporter. He used to work for the *Simcoe Reformer*. I think we're going to get a lot of help from the media as we continue to analyze this issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Prue: It is indeed a privilege and an honour to stand here and speak about this bill. As I explained in my

last two-minute comment, when this bill was first introduced in the House, I thought it was a really good bill. I thought it was an idea whose time had come. I wanted to commend the government for bringing forward a bill that would put an end not only to what happened in the last government but to what has happened in Ontario literally for decades.

If you're old enough to remember, as I do, you will remember that governments of all political stripes have put out these fancy, glossy, colour photographs of Premiers and members of the executive council. They've talked about bills in ways that, quite frankly, left a lot to the imagination. Certainly, it was not what you read in the newspaper or saw on television with the third or fourth estates and what they were able to do in terms of a realistic appraisal of what was contained in bills. It would always be one-sided.

Of course the government—and this can be any government—has a majority of members. They have the majority on the budget, they have all of the bureaucrats, all of the civil servants at their beck and call, and are able to produce documentation and advertising that an opposition party, whether it is a large opposition or a small opposition like us in the New Democrats—we may be small but we're mighty, I should add—is unable to acquire, unable to put forward. So there is a certain unfairness when governments use that massive strength, that massive pecuniary ability they have with taxpayers' money to put out propaganda.

1700

At first blush I thought this was a pretty good thing. Then the government sent us all a copy of *Getting Results for Ontario: Progress Report 2004*. A copy came across my desk, and I have to tell you I was extremely disappointed that the government saw fit to issue this little piece of what I can only describe as propaganda. So I went back to the bill, thinking, how is this little piece of propaganda related to the bill?

I went through the sections, particularly section 6. It sets out what this is supposed to do:

“6(1)(ii) To inform the public of their rights and responsibilities under the law.” I read the 16 pages and I could not find anything that informed about the rights and the duties of the public under the law or laws that have been proposed or passed in this Legislature. There was nothing in there that would give it the legitimacy for which this document was published.

“6(1)(iii) To encourage or discourage specific social behaviour, in the public interest.” I went through the 16 pages, and there was nothing in there that encouraged or discouraged behaviour of the public in the social interest. This started to disturb me.

I went to paragraph 2 and looked to see what was there. It says, “It must include a statement that the item is paid for by the government of Ontario.” I read through the 16 pages again and again, and the closest there is that this was paid for by the government of Ontario is a little logo on the back that says it was printed by the “Queen's Printer for Ontario,” but nowhere does it say that the

government of Ontario financed it or paid for it. So one has to extrapolate enormously to determine whether or not this met paragraph 2. I would suggest that it did not meet paragraph 2. Nowhere in this does it inform the taxpayers that they themselves have paid for this document and that they themselves are responsible for the document.

I went to paragraph 4: “It must not be partisan.” I looked at it, and nowhere, I must admit, inside did I see the word “Liberal,” but everything about this document is partisan. It is partisan because it refers incessantly, paragraph after paragraph, to “our government”: what our government is doing, what our government proposed in the election and what our government is doing to carry out what we had promised to the people of Ontario back in 2003. It is hugely partisan and therefore is contrary to what I find in this bill.

Paragraph 5 says, “It must not be a primary objective of the item to foster a positive impression of the governing party or a negative impression of a person or entity who is critical of the government.” There is nothing in this document that is not positive about the government. If it is not primary, it is certainly secondary. I will tell you that this particular provision of the bill causes grave concern, because what has happened in the publication of this little brochure, *Getting Results for Ontario*, is nothing short of the same partisanship which you have said will not happen under paragraph 5 of subsection 6(1) of this particular act.

The secondary object, for sure—if it's not the primary one in getting results for Ontario—is to leave “a positive impression of the governing party,” and you have ensured that it does not make a negative impression of the opposition or of those who are opposed to the measure simply by not even mentioning that there are other priorities of other members of this House, that there are other options and other things you have said that run contrary to what is contained in here.

As some of the speakers have said, there is nothing in here about any of the contentious issues we have had to deal with. There's nothing in here about the health tax. There's nothing in here about privatizing hospitals. There's nothing in here about the delisting of chiropractic services or delisting optometrists or physiotherapists. In fact, every contentious aspect that has taken place in this House in the first year of the mandate is not contained in this bill. Therefore, it paints the governing party in the best possible light and ignores what the opposition and the people have had to say on so many contentious issues that I think are really important to the people of this province.

Last but not least, it goes on in number 6 to say, “It must meet such additional standards as may be prescribed.” I tried to think what those standards might be, because we will never know until a minister at some future time prescribes additional standards. I tried to think for a long time what standards might be prescribed. Might the standards being prescribed include or exclude opposition statements on how the government is

behaving? Might they include or exclude what the people of Ontario or press reports on documents have said? Might they include or preclude government legislation that is introduced and then not followed through on? We have many bills that are languishing after first reading, that had never survived first reading and have never been introduced in the House. What might be prescribed? This caused me a great deal of difficulty.

I went back and looked again. I looked again at how this little brochure was set out and what the titles had to say. The titles and headlines really entice people to read. Just like in a newspaper, just like when you're watching the promo on television about what news item is coming up, it is intended to grab your attention and cause you to read further or, even if you don't read further, to be left with a positive impression.

Here are all the buzzwords that are contained in this little document: "Getting Results for Ontario," "Success for Students," "Lower high school drop-out rate," "Getting Results in Education," "Better Health," "Strong People, Strong Economy," "a skilled workforce," "Building a Better Future Together," and so on. There is nothing in this document that is in any way objective, that gives a different side, that weighs the pros and cons of the decisions being made or why certain decisions have precedence over others.

On the basis of this document and on the basis of the legislation, if this is what we expect to happen by passing Bill 25 at some point, I have to tell you, I am very sadly disappointed at what I thought was going to be a good bill. The publication of this document has really shown me that this bill means very little at all.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I'll speak in favour of Bill 25, the Government Advertising Act. My constituents of Thornhill and Concord surely are in support of Bill 25.

Every Ontarian during the last election over the prior administration was bombarded with free advertisements because the Tories were using public money to promote their political philosophy. My constituents did in fact, on many occasions—I was the candidate at the time—question why public money was used to promote a political party. Therefore, this bill will try to eliminate that possibility. In Ontario there are many other sectors or areas where public money can be used, such as in education, health and many other areas. Therefore I am very pleased that we recognize that reality and that we're going to put a stop to that abuse.

The Tories unfortunately could not find the proper date to call an election in their last year of office, so they kept on sending material on a monthly basis with pictures of the Premier, pictures of various cabinet ministers and the local Tory candidates. I am pleased to report to my constituents in Thornhill and Concord that we will not allow that to continue. Anything that must go out to inform the community will be done in the public interest and not in the interest of the political party that happens to be in office.

Therefore, even if for some people Bill 25 is not perfect, I invite all members to support it, because at the end of the day it is a good bill for the people of Ontario. It is a bill that will save money, and any dollar that is spent notifying people will be spent only because it is in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

1710

Mr Sterling: One of the troubling parts of this piece of legislation, along with Bill 84, which deals with the auditor, is my concern that you're turning the auditor into a position where he's going to be pitting himself for one political party against another political party.

This week, all the parties are interviewing candidates for our new Provincial Auditor. I am involved in those interviews, as well as Ms Martel, and Mr Milloy from the Liberal Party. One of the things that comes through as you question candidates with regard to the position of auditor and start to delve into and think about the role of the auditor is that he must always remain non-partisan. These two bills put the auditor in an almost impossible situation where he must choose one party over the other. He must choose whether this piece of advertising is partisan or non-partisan. Should he choose, all the time, to either defend the government or attack the government, then I think the auditor is put in a position of starting to become a partisan player in this institution.

The auditor's position has a tremendous amount of respect from the people of Ontario. I do not think it is proper that we dump this responsibility on an individual who is primarily there to look at how the operations of the government are running, and to be unbiased. This bill, along with Bill 84, starts to turn the worm on the institution of the auditor of Ontario.

Ms Martel: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments made by my colleague from Beaches-East York. I talked earlier about my concern with respect to one of the loopholes. I'm going to raise a second concern, and that has to do with what the penalties are if the government decides to contravene what the auditor has said, if indeed the auditor says that something is partisan and should not be distributed.

If you look at page 2 of the bill, subsection 2(4) talks about the prohibitions: "The government office shall not publish, display or broadcast the advertisement if the head of the office"—that is, the government office—"receives notice that, in the Provincial Auditor's opinion, the advertisement does not meet the standards required by this act," and I've already talked about my concerns with respect to the standards.

If you go further in the bill to look at what happens if a ministry decides to put the information out anyway—especially if it's just before a provincial election and you're trying to get a message out—regrettably, it appears that the only thing the auditor can do in the event of a contravention is make that public in a report. So, under section 9:

"(1) Each year, the Provincial Auditor shall report to the Speaker of the assembly about such matters as the Provincial Auditor considers appropriate relating to his or her powers and duties under this act.

"(2) In the annual report, the Provincial Auditor shall notify the Speaker about any contraventions of section 2, 3, 4 or 8." So he can notify the Speaker about a contravention.

"(3) The Provincial Auditor may make a special report to the Speaker at any time on any matter that in the opinion of the Provincial Auditor should not be deferred until the annual report."

Essentially, the annual report or a special report pointing out a contravention is the only penalty here. It's not clear to me that that's going to be enough to stop a government from putting something out that's partisan, especially just before an election.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

The member for Beaches-East York has two minutes to reply.

Interjection: OK, go ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: I called for questions and comments and nobody stood. The member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Thornhill, Lanark-Carleton and Nickel Belt for their comments. I'm not sure how much, if any, of the comments were related to the speech I made but, in any event, I welcome the fact that they stood up and participated in the public debate. I'd like to comment on what they had to say.

The member from Thornhill talked about—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: Yes, SpongeBob. You like him, do you?

Interjection: I do.

Mr Prue: The member from Thornhill talked about the public interest and that, of course, he and his party will always do everything in the best interests of the people of Ontario, but I would think that is kind of a strange statement to make. That is a self-serving statement. Any politician will say, "Of course I'm acting in your best interests," even if that is not the case at all times. That is what politicians say, and I'm disappointed that—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: No, I'm disappointed that that was his contribution to the debate.

The member from Lanark-Carleton talked about the auditor as an institution, and the need to protect that institution. I think he was correct on that.

The member from Nickel Belt talked about the auditor and the auditor's power under this bill. Of course, the auditor's power is circumscribed in view of the fact that the annual statement is made only once a year. There is nothing that would stop a government so bent from putting out partisan advertising, like the little booklet I referred to in my speech, and making it even more partisan than it already is in the time period leading up to an election, knowing full well that the auditor would be powerless to act upon it in the time frames involved.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 25 here in the

Legislature today. I heard someone talking about the member for Beaches-East York and his SpongeBob SquarePants tie. I say it is one of the sharper ones he's worn, and he's known for wearing some sharp and flamboyant ties.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we consider that a prop?

Mr Yakabuski: I would consider it some sort of a prop, but not one that I'd use in any of my acting escapades. I'm usually a little more reserved than that, Mr Speaker.

The bill we're talking about here, Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising, is a bill to deal with partisan advertising. It's hard not to be somewhat cynical about what this government has done in regard to this bill. We've heard so much from this government about how they're going to change this and change that, and what we've really seen from them is a litany of bills, motions and regulations to try to throw the hound off the scent, so to speak. They want to throw the Ontario electorate off the track, off the trail. They're on to this gang. They bring in these little bits of this and that to try to throw them off the trail, and Bill 25 is a really great example of that.

They did promise in the election that they would deal with partisan advertising. As has been pointed out by the member for Beaches-East York and my colleague from Lanark-Carleton, as well as others, this bill is so full of holes, you couldn't just drive a Mack truck through it, you could take the whole Mack truck factory and just slide it right through there without even greasing the walls. There's no problem there. It's loosely fitted. There are big, big holes there.

He talked about it being audited once a year, so the government pretty well has a free hand in dealing with it. Then, once a year, the government has a free hand and the auditor may slap their fingers after a year has expired. There are no real penalties in place. There are loopholes with regard to the advertising that could, for example, be done originating from a television station outside of Ontario. So there are many problems with this bill.

I want to point to one. I asked a question in the House about this pamphlet, Getting Results for Ontario. You're bringing in a bill such as Bill 25 that says, "We're going to do away with and we're not going to participate in partisan advertising with this new Liberal government." Then one of the first things we see is Getting Results for Ontario.

1720

I have never seen a publication full of more self-glorifying crap than this publication right here. It was basically going through the last year of the Liberal government. You would think that the address had changed from RR 1, X municipality, Ontario, to Shangri-La. We have just moved into the utopian state, because everything the Liberals have done in this first year is just wonderful. It never said a word in that publication about any of those broken promises. If you're going to recap a year, you should tell the truth, and sometimes the truth is a little harsh. Sometimes you have to actually criticize

yourself, if you're telling the truth. I would be the first one to admit that the past year for me hasn't been perfect, but if I was a Liberal, you'd think it was, because in this thing that I'm not going to stick up—I don't want to have to put it down because it might be a prop—it has been a perfect year.

Mr Barrett: What colour is it?

Mr Yakabuski: It's a bit on the red side.

Mr Barrett: What shade of red?

Mr Yakabuski: Liberal red.

Interjection.

Mr Yakabuski: Well, there. You get a quick look, but that's it.

If I was a Liberal, you'd think it had been a year of perfection. It's an encapsulation of everything they've done and haven't done and how they've changed the province so wonderfully for the better. But it doesn't say a word about breaking their promise on increasing taxes with the health care premium and the average family of four in this province now saddled with \$1,000 more in taxes a year because of the policies, programs and decisions of this government. It doesn't say anything about breaking their promise on the hydro rate cap. It doesn't say anything about that. It doesn't say anything about going to war with hospitals in the province of Ontario. It doesn't say a word of that.

So you'd think that maybe there was a real year, and then there was Fantasia all over again. There was actually what happened in the province of Ontario in the past year, and then there was the Liberal version of these events, and ne'er the twain shall meet, I can assure you, because we are living in different worlds. Hell, we're living in different universes when we compare this pamphlet with what has actually gone down in Ontario in the last year.

So that, in itself, briefly says what the difference is in what Liberals say they're going to do and what they actually do. They can't even draw an accurate picture of what's gone on in the province in the past year.

Why do we have cynicism among the voters? I know we're going to be talking about democratic renewal. This government has talked about democratic renewal, but I haven't seen any of these members who privately will tell you they disagree with many pieces of legislation this government is bringing in. But you know what happens on voting day. Yes, you've got it right: "I stand in favour of the government. They are my meal ticket, and I'm going to be going with what the Premier says." That's not democratic renewal.

In this party, our new leader, John Tory, has made it clear that we will be able to vote as we see fit, as members of the future government of the province of Ontario.

As I said, this bill is a deflection, as so many other bills are. We have a bill—I guess it's coming up soon for a vote and I'll probably vote in favour of it because it's a nothing bill; it does no harm, yet it doesn't accomplish anything but tie up the business of the House—the bring-your-own-wine bill, Bill 96. That's going to be coming up soon for third reading, I presume.

Ms Martel: It's in committee.

Mr Yakabuski: Is it in committee? I guess we'll have it in committee first. Thank you very much, the member for Nickel Belt. She's very organized about the proceedings here. I often rely on her for information of a factual nature. I get information of a factual nature from her. I appreciate that.

When that comes up, I'll probably support the bill, but I wonder what the big deal about it is, because it's not going to change anything. Nobody is going to be bringing their bottles of wine very many places, because the corkage fee is probably going to make it prohibitive to do so anyway.

Untendered contracts: They talked about transparency in government and accountability, and then they're going around and handing out untendered contracts to their Liberal friends. So should we believe what we see in this bill? With those loopholes about the auditor reporting once a year, should we believe what we see in this bill, or is this just more fluff to try to take the dog off the scent, as I said, and let the people of Ontario think they're actually doing something productive in this province when, in fact, they're doing nothing productive? It's a shell game. It's deception at its finest by the master of duplicity and deception, Dalton McGuinty himself. They're trying to perpetrate this fraud on the people of Ontario with this and so many other bills.

I want to talk about regulation 170/03 before I run out of time, because I have some real concerns about that regulation. I notice the minister has extended the time before that bill will be implemented, but my concern is that it's like you've been sentenced to hang and you get somewhat of a reprieve because the hangman has the flu so he can't hang you until next week.

We need to see some real, substantive changes in that bill and we need to see some leadership from this government. When Dennis O'Connor was given his mandate to do that report, he wasn't constricted by costs or anything else. Governments have to lead and take that information and ask, "What is real, what is realistic, what can we implement, what can we do, and can we do it without taxing the people of Ontario to the point of oblivion?"

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I was away for part of the speech by the member but I suspect that he showed this nice little brochure. He has my copy.

Mr Yakabuski: I borrowed it from you. There you go.

Ms Martel: Here's the English copy and the French copy.

I heard one of the Liberal members say earlier in the debate that the people had a right to know, that this bill was all about making sure that the people got their right to know about what the government was doing. The point that I think needs to be raised again is, it would be nice if people got all the information about what the government was doing. If you take a look at this, of course, you don't see much about all of those broken promises the government now needs to deal with. There were 231

promises before and during the election campaign. We raised some of those today; for example, the fact that the government has done nothing about stopping the claw-back of the national child benefit for the poorest families in the province of Ontario despite the fact that, before the election and during the election, they promised to do that.

We raised the issue today of the promise this government made with respect to the creation of affordable housing units. Twenty thousand affordable housing units, I believe, was the promise the Liberal government made before the election and during the election, and here we are—

Mr Yakabuski: How many have they got so far?

Ms Martel: I don't know how many they've got, because they seem to be re-announcing some of the ones the Conservatives already announced before they left office. We heard about 400 rental supplements today. That's not the same thing as creating affordable housing, from my point of view. I certainly know there was an announcement about 800 condominium units, and that's far from affordable. I don't know very many poor people who can afford condominiums—I don't know any poor people who can afford condominiums. So how that is going to help people get out of poverty is beyond me.

I agree that the people have a right to know. If they look at this book, even what's in this book doesn't do it.

I talked earlier about some of the broken promises with respect to health. There is some information that's not quite factually correct in this little brochure with respect to health. I suspect that if I looked at other areas in this book, I would see the same.

The problem is, Bill 25 is going to do nothing to ensure that people get access to the information they need with respect to both what the government is doing and, frankly, what the government isn't doing. They're not going to get it through this bill. Frankly, I regret to say that the bill has a number of loopholes that I've tried to identify this afternoon, which means they probably aren't even going to stop getting partisan advertising—something like this brochure.

I know the government says this is part of their renewal package. I don't think it's going to do much of anything to restore people's confidence in the democratic process, and I regret that.

1730

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Bill 25 is a particular favourite of Ontario's environmentalists. Passionate Ontario environmentalists everywhere breathe a sigh of relief for the tens of thousands of hectares of Ontario forest that won't fall to loggers' chainsaws merely to churn out countless skids of reports-to-taxpayers pulp. This was the four-colour pulp, packed with airbrushed photos of the two former Ontario Premiers and a host of their senior cabinet ministers. This was the stuff that generated fat fees for graphic designers, media consultants, research firms, ad agencies, media buyers and a host of other hourly billing professionals. Not one of those suppliers reduced class sizes, none of them improved health care, and not one of those slick media

pieces improved water and meat inspections. But in just one year this government has done all of that.

So after seeing nearly a third of a billion dollars of hard-earned money of Ontario taxpayers frittered away on pulp and TV commercials whose net effect on Ontario taxpayers was to supply cat box liner and prompt a bathroom break while watching TV, Ontarians had had enough. They voted for change and got a new government.

To my knowledge, not a single Ontario taxpayer has written to Premier Dalton McGuinty demanding the return of now-missing partisan government advertising and wanting those reports to taxpayers back. What Bill 25 has done is shift those hundreds of millions of dollars to smaller class sizes, lower budget deficits, a protected greenbelt, a higher minimum wage and hundreds of specific measures that make life better in ways big and small for the people of Ontario.

Mr Barrett: I want to comment on what I consider an in-depth analysis by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I think he dug a little deeper than many of us have and explained to us that this legislation is a deflection—I think he used the term “deception” or “deception at its finest,” and then went into the duplicity of this legislation—a feint, if you will, to throw one off one's game. He used the analogy of the tracking dog, a bloodhound, where the person being pursued will take certain measures to put a scent across the trail—or I think back to watching cowboy movies when you ride your horses upstream and you're not followed.

I put it in the same category as the pit bull legislation that came out at the end of the summer. That legislation obviously backfired on the Attorney General, but perhaps the goal was to take the minds of the public off issues of health taxes and broken promises.

There's a film out—I can't remember the name of it; it stars Pierce Brosnan, I think. It's one of these *To Catch a Thief* films. It's really quite entertaining. Much of the film focuses on the various techniques that are used by thieves to distract someone with clothing or set up a program or scenario to preoccupy someone, and when you realize what's happened, your diamond bracelet and wallet are missing.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to have two minutes to comment on the speech by our esteemed colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Let me say that what I really think is going on here is this: The Liberals, while they were in opposition, came forward with all these over-inflated estimates of the cost of government advertising. Sometimes I used to listen to them, and you'd think it was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. And Conservatives did spend a fair amount of money on propaganda; they did. They put out television ads and radio ads and newspaper ads, and they sent mailings to people's homes. I admit that I think the Conservatives put out some expensive propaganda.

Mr McGuinty, when he was in opposition, made it sound as if, under his government, there wouldn't be any

propaganda, that this would end. Well, then people found this, and what's this? This is propaganda. It tries to present itself as an honest and accurate report of the first year in government, but it leaves out all of the things the government has failed to do; it leaves out all of the broken promises. It doesn't refer to that famous promise, "I will not raise your taxes," and then point out that taxes went up significantly.

So I am left to say, where are we at? It seems that the Conservatives put out expensive propaganda and the Liberals put out somewhat cheaper propaganda, but it is still propaganda.

The Deputy Speaker: Anything waved over waist-high is a prop. Thank you very much.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has two minutes to reply.

Mr Yakubuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from Nickel Belt, Mississauga West and Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, and the leader of the third party.

The ongoing message seems to be that while there may be some laudable goals, the bill, as it's written, will never get there because it is designed to fail. It is designed to fail so the government can continue to do whatever it wants while perpetrating a fraud on the people of the province of Ontario to try to convince them they are actually doing something that is laudable and honourable.

Of course, the piece of propaganda that the leader of the third party had there—I had borrowed it from them early and given it back, because I always return things that I borrow. I think it's the right thing to do, just as this government should return the money it is going to be borrowing from the electorate of the province of Ontario over the next several years to finance some of their crazy programs.

Anyway, that piece of propaganda basically is the crux of one of our key oppositions to the bill. It's that they are breaking, if not the rule of the bill, the spirit of the bill, even though it hasn't been passed yet. They still want to conduct themselves as if they can do whatever they want even if they pass this bill. This piece of propaganda is so false, so pretentious, as to what has happened in the province of Ontario over the past year. If you talk to people on the street and you ask them, "Has this been a good year for the government of Ontario? Have they been carrying through with what they did?"—are you kidding? They are a bunch of—it rhymes with "criers," and I would never say it in here.

The Deputy Speaker: You can't say indirectly anything that you can't say directly, so be careful.

Mr Yakubuski: If that was inferred that way, I apologize.

The people of the province of Ontario don't trust them, don't believe them. They don't have any credibility, and this piece of propaganda further emphasizes that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hampton: I'm quite pleased to make some more comments, because there's a lot that's wrong with this

bill. First of all, the bill is not going to do what it advertises. What the government is trying to put across to the citizens of Ontario is that this bill is going to eliminate those kinds of ads and ad campaigns that many people in Ontario found objectionable. This government wants to put that across, but in fact I want to refer to a little history and then to the actual sections of the bill.

1740

One of the things that people really found objectionable, particularly about the Mike Harris government, was that that government bought a lot of very expensive advertising on Buffalo television channels, on Detroit television channels, on CNN and on some of the other big American cable networks that broadcast into Canada. What people would see when they happened to be flicking through the channels—some people do watch CNN. Some people who live in the Niagara peninsula will watch Buffalo channels. Some people who live in the environs of Windsor-Sarnia will watch Detroit channels. What people would see time and time again when they tuned into those networks was a smiling Mike Harris saying that Ontario, under the Conservative government—although he wouldn't say "Conservative government"—under his government had become a wonderful place to invest, the economy was going gangbusters and people had never been better off. If he did not say this directly, the clear inference was that Mike Harris as Premier was doing an unbelievably good job. Of course, the subtle message to people who were viewing was, "You should vote for Mike Harris," or, "You should support the Harris government." People found it really objectionable that public money was being used in that way.

I know the hype the government has put out, talking about their bill to ban or to regulate government advertising, and I know the sales job they've put out there for people, but if you read the bill carefully, that very same kind of episode could be repeated under this bill. You could literally see the now McGuinty government purchasing advertising on Buffalo television or Detroit television or Minneapolis television or CNN or—what is it?—CNBC, the business cable part of NBC, and having a smiling Dalton McGuinty giving one of his "I feel your pain" speeches or repeating his 200 and—I'm sorry, there have been so many promises, I've lost count; but promising, promising, promising or giving himself a pat on the back, saying that he has provided wonderful government.

In fact, this legislation, much boasted about by the government, much talked about by the government, would permit virtually that same thing to happen again. What would be the subtle message, the inference of that advertising? Well, the same inference that people saw under the Mike Harris government: "Oh, Dalton McGuinty must be doing a great job. You should support the McGuinty government." That would be the subtle undertone or message.

There are obvious loopholes in this legislation. That's why we shouldn't pass it. Better yet, one would think that

if the government is going to promote this, if they are actually going to say this, they wouldn't put out this kind of glitzy, glossy advertising. It seems to me that putting out this kind of glitzy, glossy advertising is clearly in conflict with what they said they would not do, what they said they aimed to prohibit, what they said was objectionable.

As I said earlier, it would appear that at this point, the only difference between the former Conservative government's propaganda and the now McGuinty government's propaganda is that the Conservative government had expensive propaganda and the Liberals have cheap propaganda. But it's propaganda all the same, and it runs completely contrary to what they said before the election, what Mr McGuinty said during the election and what they claim to say in this bill. So there are problems with the bill, and there are already evident problems with the government's behaviour.

What should we have in this kind of legislation? My colleague the member for Niagara Centre, Peter Kormos, put forward a private member's bill in which he said, "Look, if we're going to get serious about this, if we're going to deal with government advertising and make sure it isn't used for partisan purposes or make sure taxpayers' money isn't used to send a message, 'You should re-elect the government,' there are a number of principles that should be established in law." Regrettably, they're not in this bill. The principles that need to be there aren't there.

One test is that government advertising should provide good value for money. In other words, there should be a test: "What do you hope to achieve with this? What is the stated goal of the advertising?" If the department or minister can't say what the public goal is of the advertising, if you can't make that statement and then show there's value for money, the advertising shouldn't go. The cost of government advertising should be justifiable. Even above and beyond the value-for-money test, there should be some kind of justification.

One of the things we have to go through as MPPs is that if we're going to travel, we have to show we're taking the lowest cost. In other words, you can't send in a plane ticket showing you travelled business class; you go economy class. You've got to show you're using the lowest cost or the least-cost method of getting the message across.

Government advertising should deal with matters for which the government of Ontario has a direct responsibility; in other words, none of this kind of Pabulum you often see on American television networks. It used to be a picture of Mike Harris. Now it could be a picture of Dalton McGuinty. Really what it's about is promoting the face, promoting the name and the smile and then the inferential message, "Vote for me." It has to relate directly to a matter for which the government is directly responsible.

Government advertising should not be designed to promote or have the effect of promoting the interests of the party forming the government. That's why people objected to seeing Mike Harris on television, a smiling Mike Harris saying, "Aren't I a wonderful guy? Don't I

run a wonderful government?" But under this bill, you could see a smiling Dalton McGuinty, saying, "Aren't I a wonderful guy? Aren't I running a wonderful government?" They have exactly the same thing.

Mr Delaney: Where?

Mr McMeekin: Where?

Mr Hampton: I agree: Where? I agree that, if they saw that advertising, people would say, "Where? Where?"

Government advertising should be accurate and factual, with comment and analysis clearly distinguished from factual information. Again, that's not in this bill.

Clearly, had all of the above guidelines been integrated into the Government Advertising Act, the act would have been far more ambitious and ultimately a more important step in promoting integrity in government. But none of these principles is in this bill. That's why, just as under the Conservatives, even if this bill were passed under the Liberals, you would still have the prospect under this bill of seeing a smiling Dalton McGuinty coming to you on Buffalo television, Detroit television or CNN, telling you, "I'm Dalton McGuinty. Aren't I a wonderful guy? Don't you like my smile?" Inferentially, the message is, "Vote for me"—all paid for by taxpayers' money.

Mr Ramal: That's not correct.

Mr Hampton: One of the members says I'm not correct. I've got to tell you, I remember the minister responsible for Management Board on the day he introduced this legislation having to go around trying to lean on everybody in the press gallery because they read it, and they read it exactly as I read it, that this would allow what many people found most objectionable about the Mike Harris government to happen again with the Dalton McGuinty government.

So there we have it. That's why we will not support the bill. It's going to continue to allow propaganda like this. It's going to continue to allow the kind of television advertising that people most objected to under the Harris Conservatives.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr McMeekin: I'm pleased to stand and respond to the leader of the third party, who, as is usually the case, brings an interesting perspective to the debate. My experience, in several years of municipal politics and a few years in this place, is that people ask for very little of the government and often get less in return. On a good day, people will say—those who are engaged—"What is it your government's about? What is it you're hoping to do?" I like to respond to that kind of inquiry by saying, "We're trying to do politics differently." It's really important that in this place, the people's place, we can once again engage in discussion about democratic things.

I don't think partisan political advertising works, by the way. I think we have seen some evidence of that. I think what people want to see is a government that has a vision. They want to know what that vision is. They want to know where the government is going. Every journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step, but it helps if you've got some idea where you're going. They want

some idea that you're able to think and plan strategically, and that you're prepared to be results-based.

I want to say to the members opposite that this government gets it. We don't believe that you have to engage in the starvation of hope and the feeding of cynicism by tracking out all kinds of partisan nonsense. We're quite prepared to declare our vision for the province of Ontario because it's a vision that's shared by the people. This government will be judged on that basis, and we look forward to engaging in that discussion. All the talk about democratic change is a good thing to happen in this place.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lanark-Carleton—well, no. Who's standing here? The member for Lanark-Carleton? Thank you.

Mr Sterling: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

I listened to the leader of the third party—

Mr Hampton: Seniority rules.

Mr Sterling: Unfortunately, for me—and what bothers me about this piece of legislation and these other so-called democratic renewal pieces of legislation is that they are holding out to the public that they are going to do something to themselves, they are going to constrain themselves. The public should know that the legislation is phony; it doesn't constrain anybody from doing anything.

The other part that upsets me a little bit is that the government seems intent on bringing legislation to restrict legislators from acting on the principles of integrity, and saying to the public, "You make your decision whether or not this member has lived up to the duties he performs as an MPP, a cabinet minister, a backbencher or a member of the opposition party."

Number one, we have phony legislation. We have a party that's demonstrated they don't even want to follow their proposed legislation, and they keep taking away from the whole aspect that the public can trust the integrity of politicians. They have created the mistrust because they broke so many promises from the previous election. What they are trying to do is regain that trust by saying, "We're going to confine ourselves so you no longer have to look at the integrity of the individual, the integrity of the party, the integrity of the leader." I find that very demeaning to the whole purpose of being elected in this place and saying to people, when I am performing as an MPP, that I live by my word.

Mr Baird: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the House to be able to sit beyond 6 o'clock this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton has asked for unanimous consent for the House to sit beyond 6 of the clock. Do we have unanimous consent; Agreed?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want a caveat.

The Deputy Speaker: OK. The member for Nepean-Carleton has asked—I heard a no.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for the House to sit between

the hours of 6 and 7 tonight, and that no bills will be called, it will be strictly just procedural motions.

The Deputy Speaker: I've had unanimous consent asked for the House to sit between 6 and 7 o'clock, and that no bills be called. Do I have consent? No.

Mr Baird: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I think I can capture it, actually. Could I ask for unanimous consent for the House to sit beyond 6 o'clock and that any business conducted in the House only be able to be adopted unanimously?

The Deputy Speaker: How are we doing? Do I have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Now, the table will help me, where we were in the order. I was at questions and comments. The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: To the comments my leader made: I was paying great attention at the House leaders' meeting as the leader for the third party, my good friend Mr Hampton, was speaking on this particular bill. I do have to say, however, that we have been down this debate a number of times. The previous government was in power, and we know that they used advertising in a way that most people probably hadn't seen in a long time in the province of Ontario. This government is trying to do the right thing politically by saying, "We're going to basically remove somewhat the ability of the government to use government advertising to promote itself."

But it's a bit of a mug's game. The reality is that governments will continue to advertise. For example, if my leader can pass me one of those leaflets on his desk, in French—governments advertise all the time. This isn't a prop, Mr Speaker. The reality is that government does have the right to publish particular initiatives—

The Deputy Speaker: If it's above your waist and more than 10 seconds, it's a prop.

Mr Bisson: But you don't understand. My point is that the government publishes leaflets through their ministry budgets all the time about what government initiatives are all about. That will continue to happen even if this bill happens to be passed. Quite frankly, government will keep on advertising initiatives of the government through their ministries even if this bill is passed, so it's a bit of a mug's game.

Part of what I would want to add to this is, I guess one of the debates we should have is, what are the legitimate needs of government to be able to inform the citizens about programs and policies that people need to know about? The second issue is, what ability should members of either the government or the opposition have to communicate with their constituents?

You would know that at one time a long time ago, about 10 years ago, there was an ability for members to communicate directly with their constituents by way of mailings. The Conservative government got rid of that and, as a result, no member in this assembly, including government members, has the right to do that type of mailing any more. Why don't we have a debate about those particular issues and look at how we can advertise in a way that's fair not only to the taxpayer but to the people of this assembly and the public?

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): That will change, Mr Speaker, in three years, so there will be other combinations.

I'm pleased to be able to spend just a couple of minutes responding and making some comments on the time of the member from Kenora-Rainy River, the leader of the third party. I note in his comments that eliminating objectionable material was a theme that came up more than once.

I think that there are some objectionable parts of materials that go out, and I think they are the types of things that the public doesn't want to see and hear. They don't want to see the faces of cabinet ministers. They don't want to see their names printed and the roles they play. They don't want to see them quoted in little messages.

I think what drove it home for me was last spring during the pre-election process, the peekaboo time from March on. During that time, I had come to my door the pamphlet that went to millions of households—they might have been only a few cents each, but millions of households—across the province of Ontario: Energy. I saw the Minister of Energy, who now sits across the floor, his picture, the quotes and the role he played. Then there was the education one that followed, and then there was the health one that followed, and my favourite—the one that my constituents really enjoyed seeing—was the one on finance. They sent a clear message to the then finance minister on election day that that type of advertising was not something that they were prepared to accept, and she's no longer sitting in the seat across the floor. As a matter of fact, I am now filling the seat that she once filled.

I think the member for Kenora-Rainy River is quite correct in saying that the public doesn't want to see those objectionable parts of materials put out there. The Chair of Management Board, my minister, is a respected and honoured member of this Legislature. Even today, he actually answered a question and was well-responded to by the opposition, about his intentions—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The leader of the third party and the member for Kenora-Rainy River, you have two minutes to respond.

1800

Mr Hampton: I want to thank the members for their comments. I want to boil this down so that the person at home understands it.

What it boils down to is this: If we'd been here three years ago and the Conservatives had put this out with blue ink and blue lettering, Dalton McGuinty would have been swinging from the chandeliers, saying, "That's an improper use of taxpayers' money, for propaganda."

The Liberal government is elected, and what do they do? They put this out in Liberal election colours, lots of glossy pictures promoting the government, and does anybody in the Liberal caucus stand up and say, "That's propaganda"? No. Suddenly it becomes legitimate gov-

ernment information. But if you changed the colours on this and you used it to boast about the record of Ernie Eves or Mike Harris, Liberals would be swinging from the chandeliers. That's how phony this is.

The other piece of this is what people found most objectionable about the Conservatives: the television ads that used to run on American television that then got piped into Ontario households. If you read this bill, those kinds of ads will be allowed to happen again, ads that run on CNN or Detroit television or Buffalo television but get piped into Ontario living rooms. That will be allowed to continue under this bill.

The other thing that will be allowed to continue is something—when you talk to advertisers, they'll tell you that the best kind of advertising does a sort of image creation. It doesn't state a message directly; it just tries to convey an image. In fact, that kind of image advertising will be allowed under this bill. What's the effect of this bill? Not much at all, and that's why it should be sent back to the printer.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I just enjoyed the time I've had to debate this bill. I'm sure the Minister of Northern Development and Mines would like to talk about something else that we were just talking about.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate? Thank you.

Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received a note. "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mr Phillips for second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising, be deferred until November 25." It has been signed by the chief government whip.

Orders of the day.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I call government order G73.

The Deputy Speaker: Consent to deal with that order? Agreed.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE
LAW AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY), 2004
LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr Takhar has moved second reading of Bill 73. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I move that the bill be ordered to the finance and economic affairs committee.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the House calendar.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Bartolucci: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet commencing Monday, December 13, 2004, until Thursday, December 16, 2004.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I would ask for unanimous consent to move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Baird: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1807.

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Thursday 25 November 2004

Jeudi 25 novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I move that, in the opinion of the House, the government of Ontario should:

1. Take action to develop a comprehensive strategy in order to reform our first-past-the-post electoral system, including consideration of proportional representation, preferential ballots, a form of mixed systems or others, in the election of Ontario's parliamentarians;

2. Fully engage the citizens of Ontario in the decision-making on a preferred method of electing Ontario's parliamentarians; and

3. Establish a citizens' assembly, the purpose of which would be to provide advice on public policy issues on a continuing basis.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Arthurs has moved ballot item number 41. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Arthurs, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr Arthurs: I'm particularly pleased this morning to be able to present to this assembly during private members' time a resolution on democratic renewal. I look forward to hearing during the next hour from other members on what I believe to be an important matter for this House and the people of Ontario.

The resolution does come in three parts, and I will be speaking to each one during the course of the next 10 minutes very briefly.

But first, Mr Speaker, if I could, let me pose to you and the Legislature the following propositions: (1) that in forming a government, it should be the objective of the electorate to create such a government with the support of less than 50% of those eligible to vote and cast ballots; and (2) that a majority of the members elected to the Legislature should be elected with less than a majority of the votes cast, that is, less than 50% of the votes cast. If our electoral system were other than it is and such propositions were made, I would hasten to suggest that they would meet with some scepticism. But we know that is exactly the current situation.

In forming a government, the last earned majority, the government that had more than 50% of the popular vote, was in 1937, some 67 years ago. On the election of members to this House in the most recent election in 2003, 60 seats, a majority, were won with less than a majority of the votes cast, thus to say that a majority of the members of this Legislature had the electoral support of less than 50% of the votes cast in their ridings. I can include myself among that group.

It's for those types of reasons that I believe it's important for us to explore and engage the citizens of Ontario in debate on democratic renewal. It may well be at the end of the day that our first-past-the-post system best serves the province, but I believe we have a responsibility and an obligation to put matters of democratic renewal before the citizens of this province, all of them, from our First Nations to our most recent immigrants, those of all ages, whether they're wealthy or destitute, whether they come from rural or urban communities.

More specifically to the resolution at hand—and I'm just going to repeat a part of it—it speaks to what the government should undertake, some direction: first, to develop a comprehensive strategy to consider reform of a variety of sorts, everything from proportional representation, preferential ballots, some mixed form, or others that may not be included in that rather limited list; second, to encourage the full engagement of the citizens of the province on a preferred method of electing those of us in this assembly; and third, the establishment of a citizens' assembly to provide advice on public policy on a continuing basis that goes beyond the date of an election.

With regard to the first part of the resolution, the most recent process launched by the government must be comprehensive. It must provide for the exploration, examination and consideration of various models, including the current first-past-the-post system. In the last generation alone, the pace of change has accelerated socially, economically, technologically and demographically. We're a different province. Our political traditions, though, are firmly planted in the past and need to be wrested from their slumber. We have an obligation to question a system—our system—which is failing to respond to the changes in Ontario.

In 1865, Ernest Naville, a Swiss political scientist and philosopher, wrote: "In a democratic government, the right of decision belongs to the majority, but the right of representation belongs to all." I think it's a poignant quote in speaking of what democratic governments are about, both in decision-making and in representation, and

I would suggest that in many cases not only aren't the majority in the decision-making, but certainly all of Ontarians are not effectively and adequately represented.

The second part of the resolution speaks to the involvement of Ontarians in this process, to "fully engage the citizens of Ontario." This is intended to ensure not only the broadest range of consultation and public input, dialogue, debate, but also inclusion in the decision-making process. It's intended, as Minister Phillips often refers to, to challenge ourselves to maximize public involvement.

1010

With an ever-declining turnout at the polls, those of us who have served municipally, provincially and those who serve federally are more than aware that the need is self-evident. The percentage turnout continues to decline, election after election. Full participation is healthy. A transparent, constructive democracy allows for open and honest debate. We need to maximize opportunities for all Ontarians to learn about all systems that might be available. We need to draw on the public for their ideas, their suggestions and their participation.

Broadening citizen engagement in these processes and revitalizing the democracy will also resonate with the young people in our communities. By utilizing the new media, on-line dialogues and enhancement of e-government, we'll modernize a democracy we all share in, but more importantly, encourage and involve the young people in our community who are far more conversant with those technologies than I. I've said on more than one occasion, I believe, that I am part of the last generation of Luddites.

Part three of the resolution speaks to public policy issues. Its intention is to engage the public through a citizens' assembly on an ongoing, continuing basis, not a short-term basis, to provide advice on public policy.

It's my view that too often we are encumbered by the partisanship, the partisan nature, of our democratic system. We need to find better ways to seek the advice of the citizens of Ontario. We need to find better ways in which the development of public policy and advice on public policy are more broadly ranged and have the opportunity to be less partisan, particularly in that time frame between elections.

There are key portfolios that are of concern to all Ontarians and some portfolios that are of greater concern to fewer Ontarians with more specific interests. But in areas such as health, education and public safety, I would pose to you that an ongoing process of advice in a less partisan nature, but broadly representative and not just consultative on issue-specific matters, will well serve this Legislature and the people of Ontario.

There will be those who might want to ask why at this time, in light of the government's actions a few weeks ago, this matter would be before the Legislature in the form of a resolution. Well, those of us who are here and have been here will fully understand the process by which private members' hours are balloted well in advance and the necessity and requirement that the members provide to the Clerk of the Assembly and the

table their intentions specifically in regard to private members' bills, resolutions or matters of private business. In doing that, private members are not necessarily aware of the actions being proposed by government or its ministers. In as much as this, I believe, is consistent with the actions currently being taken by the government, they were prepared in the absence of that activity, but I think with an understanding that there is a need for democratic renewal. Having served in elected office for some 20-odd years now, I'm a strong proponent.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): We have a great number of citizens in our camp with respect to this particular motion. We're being given 15 minutes, our caucus of 24 members, to debate an issue that may change the history of Ontario politics for the next 100 years. Our old system has been in place for 137 years, yet we see the government members bring forward motions to try to restrict the opposition's ability to debate this particular matter.

A member of the opposition could have brought forward an alternate motion. We agree to changing the structure of this particular part of our legislative process all the time. We have eight members who are going to speak on this for less than two minutes each, because all of them want to have their say. We cannot condone this motion in front of this Legislature under this particular part of our legislative process.

We have 15 minutes for our party, 15 minutes for the New Democratic Party and 10 minutes for the backbenchers of the governing party. We cannot consider this kind of issue and this motion and come to a conclusion in this short period of time.

I have called on the government to set up a select committee with equal representation of all parties to sit down and figure out what this process should be. We should have the elected representatives of Ontario, as we now have, decide on how this process should take place so that when the results come out, they will have credibility.

As it now stands, the government refuses to do this. They want to set the framework for this committee. They want to tell the committee how to report. They want to select the committee.

We cannot stand this. We must not give sanction to this resolution, because of the lack of time for members to participate. This is a most undemocratic process, when the government is talking about doing something of a renewal for our democratic process here in Ontario.

Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It's my pleasure as well to speak to the motion this morning. I was listening to the honourable member from the other side who proposed the motion and I certainly have some questions that I don't think we'll be able to ask or answer in the time given to us.

However, I noticed he talked about proportional representation, and I certainly have some grave concerns about our moving in that direction. He talked about the last time there was a majority of the popular vote in this province, in 1937. We didn't hear concerns about

whether people were being represented for a long time. It's only in the last maybe three or four terms of government that we've started to hear this being talked about. I think it goes more to what has happened after people are elected than the process by which they are elected. I think where we need some real reform is in what goes on in this House and how we do our job once we're elected.

As for the right of representation, I can tell you that when I was elected as the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I became the representative of every citizen of that riding, not just of those who voted for me. I represent the rights and aspirations of every citizen in my riding and I will speak on their behalf in this House.

It seems to me that some people are thinking this idea of proportional representation is the panacea to all that ails this system. Well, it goes a lot deeper than that. It's about what happens in the House and elsewhere after we're elected.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I too want to just very quickly speak to the motion that's before us. Obviously, the government has been talking about introducing this type of thing for some time. I find it rather strange that we would have a motion like this to be debated here with really no information or help to help me make the decision.

One of the things I find very curious is, this is called democratic renewal. I heard the member who introduced the motion suggest that we're getting less and less participation in our democracy to elect us to this place. I think what's causing that is not the way we're voted for but the fact that they don't have confidence that when they have elected someone, that individual will come and do what they said they were going to do.

I think there's no greater example in Ontario's history than what we have with the present government. They made all kinds of promises to get elected, and the people who voted for the members representing that government thought they would come here and implement those things. Now we find that that's not what happens at all. I think if we were going to do some democratic renewal, we would take a stand on that.

A number of weeks ago, I introduced a motion in this House on opposition day. It was the type of motion to give rural Ontario and the farmers of Ontario some support that the government, before the election, had promised, and after the election had taken away. Members from the government side had stood and told their people, "We disagree with what the government is doing," and yet when they got in here, they voted against putting those programs back.

Rather than putting a new program in place or putting a process in place to make changes, I think we need to make some changes in how we operate in this place on behalf of our citizens. That's why I will not be supporting this motion. I think much more work needs to be done on each member individually, rather than trying to tell us all how the people should elect differently.

1020

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I intend to support this motion because I think it's important in the evolution of the democratic system in the province of Ontario.

I look at this from a bit of a historical context. When you go back to the 19th century in Ontario, we think of William Lyon Mackenzie challenging the Family Compact of the day and meeting with his colleagues in Montgomery's Tavern to think about a reform process in Upper Canada to make sure that the people were indeed represented, so their ideas and concepts could be brought forward in an assembly to have a dialogue, to have a debate on the issues of the day.

We think of George Brown, if he were around today as the owner and the editor of the *Globe and Mail*, who epitomized at that time what it meant to be a reformer. I can see what he would say today in his editorials in the *Globe and Mail*, clearly supporting a group of citizens coming together to examine the electoral process in the province of Ontario.

We think of Lord Baldwin, who designed the structure of municipal government with the Baldwin Act in 1843, which is essentially still in effect in Ontario today in the 21st century.

You look at former people who were in this Legislature. We think of Donald C. MacDonald of the NDP, and Stephen Lewis, who, if they were in this chamber today, would no doubt support this motion to look at electoral reform and other important public policy issues in Ontario.

I look across the aisle and I think of when Tom Wells and Bette Stephenson were here, two reform-minded people, whom I can see being very involved to present some ideas into this process. I think of the people who were on our side of the House at one time: Robert Fletcher Nixon, the man who was described in an article at one time as "the best Premier that Ontario never had." We think of Sean Conway, who was an institution in this place from 1975 to 2003. We think of those individuals, and if they were here today, collectively, they would want to share in this debate about looking at ways to make the electoral system in Ontario responsive to Ontario in the 21st century.

There are a number of articles that have been put together lately by a number of scholars who have reviewed this area, and I would just like to get on the record an article that was written by Kent Weaver called "A Hybrid Electoral System for Canada." Even though he refers in this article to our federal system, I believe it does have some bearing on what we might be looking at here in Ontario.

"Given the trade-off between single-party majority government and representational equity for political parties—and the political sensitivity of the former for politicians in power—the most practical objective for electoral reform is to lessen inequitable treatment of voters and parties rather than eliminating them entirely. A hybrid electoral system specifically tailored to Canadian—or Ontario's—"conditions can successfully marry

the Westminster-style parliamentary system's concern for stable single-party majority government with the representational concerns of more proportional systems. Specifically, the federal government could institute a reform that:

"(1) increases the number of seats in the House of Commons"—or the Ontario Legislature, you could insert there—"by 10%, with those seats distributed among the" ridings "according to population"—each riding "receiving roughly 10% more seats than it does now;

"(2) gives priority in awarding compensation seats within each"—they're referring federally—"province to the party that finishes first in a nationwide vote until giving that party another compensation seat would take its provincial seat share over that of its provincial vote share, at which point it passes to the second party in national vote share, then the third largest etc;

"(3) fills compensation seats from party lists established before the election. Candidates on these party lists may, but need not, also be candidates in individual constituencies."

That is an example of Mr Weaver looking at a hybrid electoral system for Canada. But as I said, it could equally be applied in the province of Ontario, and it's something that the citizens' jury or the citizens' assembly, as has been suggested by my colleague from Ajax-Pickering-Uxbridge, could indeed look at.

There's no question in my mind, when I chat with people in the riding of Peterborough, that there is some concern that in today's Ontario Legislature there's an underrepresentation of females, there's an underrepresentation of individuals from our First Nations community, and there's an underrepresentation of those other individuals who make up the wonderful cultural mosaic that is Ontario today.

There are pros and cons. This is an article that I picked up the other day from Herbert Grubel. Mr Grubel is a former Reform MP for the riding of Capilano-Howe Sound from 1993 to 1997. In his article, he flags that indeed there may be some pitfalls with proportional representation, but he does highlight the fact that through his experience as an MP from British Columbia and then subsequently on the citizens' jury in British Columbia, there is a need. It's helpful for democracy to look at its mechanism, along with a series of other options, to in fact—what we'd all like to see is increased voter participation in Ontario.

For the life of me, from my way of thinking—I think we all should be concerned about this: The turnout for provincial elections in Ontario should be in excess of 90%; people should be fully engaged in the democratic process in the province of Ontario. Obviously, there's something that's restraining these individuals from participating fully in our democratic process in Ontario.

If you look at the municipal level, it's considered now, in many jurisdictions in Ontario that a high turnout is something in the neighbourhood of 43% to 45%. That indicates to me that more than half of the citizens in any given municipality in Ontario now are no longer

participating in the process. I think it's a real opportunity, through the proposal that was put forward by my colleague, to look at a number of options.

This is part of a legacy. When we look down the road, during the time that you and I, Mr Speaker, will get to spend in this great place, what legacy do we want to leave for the next generation of Ontarians? Our legacy, I think, should be that we want to look at ways that we can re-engage people in the democratic process in the province of Ontario by embarking on a citizens' jury or a citizens' assembly to look at a number of issues. I think it's vitally important for us in the 21st century in Ontario.

1030

It's not just electoral reform that we want to look at. I know my friend from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge wants to look at election financing in Ontario and how we finance our campaigns: perhaps just in time, reporting on individuals who contribute to political parties to make it much more transparent to the people of Ontario; perhaps looking at people who give to candidates during leadership campaigns—that's not transparent now and it's not reported—to eliminate that veil of secrecy that has shrouded the whole activity with regard to leadership campaigns in Ontario.

We have a real opportunity to look at all aspects of how we operate our democratic mechanisms here in Ontario. I think it's what people are looking for. We're looking for leadership, and I think this motion will add to that as we look forward.

I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to be a part of the debate here today. I think as Mr Sterling, our critic on democratic renewal, said, this is certainly premature in terms of what's going on. The government has already announced through the Premier that they're going to conduct an exercise with respect to what's before us in this motion. Why would we be dealing with this today, when in fact the process has been announced by the democratic renewal minister, the Attorney General, and we have no idea what's going to come out of that process?

What the member is asking today is for the Legislature to adopt the process that is now under consultation with respect to democratic renewal, which is a part of their agenda. I think it's correct to say that it doesn't matter what system we have if the Legislature isn't working the way it should work.

An example was yesterday in the government agencies committee, where I put forth a motion to open up the process with respect to appointments, not only reviewing Premiers' appointments but also ministerial letters, which make up 33% of the process. It was voted down by the Liberal-backed majority of that government agencies committee, and they broke their promise to make government agencies more transparent and accountable to the public.

The process, in terms of how we work in this Legislature, is just as important. I think our leader, John Tory,

has put forth a platform that should be adhered to by the members in this Legislature: to bring greater democratic renewal today. So I won't be supporting this.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It's quite interesting to listen to this debate so far, and the different positions being taken. I think it's an important resolution, or motion, before us today. It doesn't give a lot of detail, as the government's announcement last week, which I attended, didn't give a lot of detail, therefore I'm jumping into the void that's been left in terms of making some suggestions about process.

I want to say very clearly to the Conservative members, indeed to all the members here—I've been in this place since 1990. I've been in government, I've been a backbencher for a while in government, I was a cabinet minister and I've sat in opposition. I now sit as the deputy leader of the New Democratic Party. I say to those who think that fiddling with the existing system is going to make the changes we need to update democracy in this province, it is not going to work.

They've been in government as well; you're in government now; we've been in government. We all see, when a majority of any party gets into government, that when rule changes are made, they are actually made to enhance the power of the government and to decrease the accessibility and the power of the opposition. I think it's just human nature. I'm not slamming any particular party here. It's happened under all our parties, and I believe it will continue to happen as long as we keep this system, which worked for its time.

Let's keep in mind that this system, which has been in place for, what, 137 years, was brought in before women had the vote, let alone the lack of women we have as representatives still. I think it's something like 21% now in 2004. The lack of our aboriginal people and other visible minorities is a disgrace, really, when you think of it. We have to change the system. The idea of trying to fiddle around the edges is just not going to work.

What I said—and it's true; I don't have a lot of time, but I'm sure we'll have more opportunities to talk about this—is that part of the strategy we're talking about here today must ensure that the citizens' assembly is independent and accountable, and that a set of principles and terms of reference and mandate are absolutely key, because what is set out in that set of principles will determine how the citizens' assembly looks at the problem and will focus their recommendations.

What happened in BC, in my humble view, from looking at what happened there—I don't believe the mandate and the terms of reference allowed that broader discussion. It was very clear. You couldn't increase members in the assembly, for instance. That, right away, limits some of the directions the committee might have recommended. It also didn't look at, as one of its principles, getting more women elected.

I see here today that there are all kinds of girls and boys from different schools up in our galleries. This may sound like a little bit of a boring debate to them about democracy, but I'm really glad you're here for this today.

I say to the girls who might want to run some day that right now in this place only 21% of the people sitting here are women, and we want to change that. That's one of the things that proportional representation can change.

I'm sure each party leader received a letter from Rosemary Spiers, the chair of Equal Voice. She's talking about that same issue and says that, right now, as I pointed out, "...only 21% of the seats in the Legislature are held by women. At the present rate of change"—to the girls here today, it's going to take a long time if we don't change the system, because Equal Voice has calculated—"it will take four more generations before our half of the population can hope to achieve equal representation in the Ontario House."

That letter goes on to point out that they have a preference. They've looked at all of the different kinds of proportional representation and they saw that "the mixed member proportional voting system" which they have in Scotland, Germany and New Zealand "has substantially increased the number of elected women."

In the NDP, as you know, we have an affirmative action process, unlike the other parties, and we do better overall proportionately, but still not good enough. What Equal Voice is saying is, we need both: We need to change the system to a kind of proportional representation that includes that in it, but also that parties have an affirmative action program. When you put the two together, you will increase the number of women much more quickly, which in my view is absolutely critical.

I've talked to the Attorney General—I'm the democratic renewal critic for my party—about our involvement in this process. In order for the integrity of this government process that has been put in place to be kept, it absolutely has to be transparent and agreed to by all parties in this Legislature. That is absolutely critical. Whether or not the Conservatives believe in proportional representation, we do, although not every person in our party does, but overall our party does support proportional representation. I know I do.

I believe, for instance, that it is absolutely critical that, if there's a citizens' assembly, we look at what worked in BC and what didn't work: that it is absolutely transparent, that it's agreed upon by all of the members, and that it reports back to the Legislative Assembly, not the Attorney General's office, which was, I think, what the Gibson report in BC had recommended. I think they had their assembly report back to the AG's office there. We shouldn't do that; we should make sure it reports back to the Legislative Assembly here. We also want to make sure that the budget and all of the other components, if a citizens' assembly is put together, goes through a real legislative process, not through the Attorney General's office.

1040

Some of the things I'd like to see happen immediately include real-time disclosure. The minister mentioned that election finance reforms etc will be dealt with by something called a citizens' jury. I believe that's the kind of thing the Liberals promised they'd deal with, that they'd

do. I've been on my feet in the House saying, "Do that now." There are certain things within the system that we need to fix. That was a promise that shouldn't wait to be part of this.

I've got to ask the question, if you cherry-pick a fixed date for elections, which the Liberals have done, to do now but, at the same time, put aside something like the importance of real-time disclosure as part of this whole committee makeup, why do that? I would say, put the fixed election date in the whole mix, because once you start fiddling with the system and talking about changing the system, that should become part of the discussion or, at the very least, pick out some of these other components like real-time disclosure, which is not a problem. You'll recall that I brought a fax machine into the House one day and said, "This is a real-time machine." It's not hard to disclose the donations that the Liberals, or any of the parties, are getting when they have these high-priced dinners. So I think the government should take a look at some of those smaller issues, things like that, which can be reformed now and dealt with as the Liberals promised.

Overall, changing the system, as has been recommended by this resolution today, is going to involve the citizens of this province. I would say to the government that one of the issues you brought forward was enumeration. We all know from our ridings in the past several elections that those lists are a mess. If people are going to be chosen to be on that citizens' assembly from the voters' list, then I would say we've got a problem. A whole bunch of people will be left off because they're not on the voters' list. So when the government talks about targeted enumeration, let's make the target all of Ontario; let's start a proper enumeration process again.

I want to leave a little time for our former democratic renewal critic, Gilles Bisson, but those are just a few of my thoughts about the process that I, of course, plan and hope to be very much involved in. We will be suggesting a number of principles and ideas for terms of reference for this process to proceed.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm pleased to join in the debate on what I think is a very important issue, and that is the re-engagement of citizens across this province in their democracy. I think it involves something that is somewhat difficult for politicians—some more than others—and that is to listen rather than talk. If we can encapsulate what we believe and what this private member's resolution that my colleague Mr Arthurs has brought forward is all about, it is really about listening to the citizens in this province about why they do or do not feel engaged in our current democratic process.

Over the last number of months, I've had a lot of opportunity to do some of that listening, and I want to share with the members of the Legislature some of what I have heard. I recently had an opportunity to listen to a group of youth in this province, who advanced a report called *Just Listen to Me*, again building on the idea that "We need to be listened to; our voices need to be heard." These youth were reflective of a variety of backgrounds.

Some of the young people had been wards of the state, some of them had had issues with the CAS, some of them had lived on the street, and others had had lives that would maybe reflect a little bit more the lives that we're familiar with. But at the end of the day, one of the key things that they asked the government was, "Please listen to us. Listen to our perspective, listen to what we have to say and please acknowledge that we do need to be engaged."

What this resolution is about is, in part two, to "fully engage the citizens of Ontario." That is something that we are currently undertaking, and I think the stars are becoming aligned. We are hearing a lot more about why citizens want to see their faces reflected in this Legislature. I agree with my colleague from across the House who talked about this place needing to be more reflective. It needs to be more reflective of the variety of faces across Ontario.

With respect to women, we have reached a cap, somewhat, in this country, of 20%, 21%. We used to talk a little bit more about, "Let time pass. We will see more women." Well, why are we not seeing more women and why are we not seeing more representation in the Legislature?

Those are questions that those of us who believe in democracy—and certainly, if we're here and we put our name on a ballot and we wanted to participate in this process, we need to see that reflective nature here, because, as I stated at the beginning, there are many, many voices that are not being heard in this Legislature.

In this private member's bill, to talk about going out and listening—and I want to also share a little bit more about, yes, the government has started on some of these initiatives, because we all agree that it's very important and we do need to have more engagement.

I had an opportunity to participate in the Democracy Challenge that was launched on November 19 by the minister responsible for democratic renewal. The tag line of the Democracy Challenge was very interesting. We really wanted in that Democracy Challenge to inform, inspire, engage.

When I had an opportunity to sit and listen to the young people who were collected in that room, I heard from them the very same message that I heard from high school students in my own riding when I'd gone and participated at a leadership forum at Father Redmond, from the students and the young people who launched the *Just Listen to Me* report who were working with the child advocate in the province, and that was, "Our voices need to be heard. We want to be inspired. We want to see our ideas reflected in the work that takes place in this Legislature."

But in order to figure out what we need to do and what needs to be changed, we first have to figure out what will engage and how we can bring those voices forward. By starting with the voices of those who are engaged in projects like Kids Voting and the other great projects that are taking place across the country, we are going to be able to inspire others to participate. The youth who were

at the Democracy Challenge talked a lot about how to get those youth who do not see their face reflected in anything that we do in this Legislature, who do not see the importance of it, to participate. We need to build that snowball. We need to get everyone interested and willing to participate in our democratic process. That responsibility lies with us, and it starts by stopping talking and starting listening.

The Deputy Speaker: One second. Speaking of that, the chatter has been a little loud in here this morning, making it difficult to hear. So if the members would just keep that in mind while there are speakers on the floor.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): It's regrettable that time in private members' hour is being utilized for this purpose. We know the government made an announcement, and the opposition, in terms of this substantive motion, has the total of 15 minutes to participate in this kind of debate. So it's something of an unfortunate joke, but I think it's indicative of the way the members of the Liberal Party treat this place.

They made the announcement with respect to their own initiative in this regard, outside of the assembly. We see it on a day-to-day basis by the ministers in the Liberal government refusing to answer direct questions from opposition members, who represent a majority of the population in this province, and we're still not getting substantive and meaningful answers to questions posed.

I think the first step in any initiative like this should be to determine the root causes of disillusionment among the non-voters in the province. There should be a select committee of this Legislature to try and determine why people are not participating, why they're not voting.

I think you might find out one of the significant reasons is when you have the leader of a political party, Mr McGuinty, basing an election campaign, significant television advertising on standing in front of the people of Ontario and promising, "I will not increase your taxes. If there's one thing you can count on, I will not increase your taxes if I'm the Premier of Ontario," and within two months, what did he do? He brought in the largest tax increase in the history of the province of Ontario. Does that have an impact on people being disillusioned? They went out and voted for this man based on a very significant promise, and within two months he broke it. Does that not have an impact on voters? Does that not disillusion the people of the province of Ontario? It certainly does. It's a sham. This motion is a sham. It's wasting the time of private members and we will vote against it.

1050

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I first of all want to put on the record my personal view and also the view of the party, which is that we believe this current system, first past the post, has to be modernized. The reality is that when one of the few British parliamentary systems that still operates on a system where a government that gets elected with 35% or 45% of the popular vote could end up with 60%, 70%, 80% of the seats in the House, it seems to us, and I think to many people, it

doesn't make a lot of sense. We need to have a system in this province that says once the election is over, if a particular party got 48% of the vote, they should have 48% of the seats. The litmus test is that if you can't—

Mr Yakabuski: Disaster.

Mr Bisson: I listen to the Tories next door say, "Disaster." It's a big disaster in Germany, where they've operated with first past the post since after the Second World War, along with most other countries in Europe, and their economies are outperforming the economy of North America. They're politically more stable than a whole bunch of other places. So the argument that proportional representation is a disaster is a stretch beyond the imagination. It certainly is not.

The other issue—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No, they are a mixed system.

Mr Sterling: There's 9% unemployment.

Mr Bisson: Now the Tories are saying the economic union isn't working and that the economy of Europe isn't working. Look at the Eurodollar as compared to the Canadian and American dollars, and you'll find that the European economy is doing quite well. Anyway, I'm not debating you; I'm debating the House.

I would just make this other point. We believe that if the government goes ahead with this process they've put forward and actually does the right thing as far as the process of trying to figure out how to move forward with democratic renewal, it could be a good thing.

The basic problem we have in this Legislature is that it has evolved into a system where the Premier and a few unelected advisers who are around him or her, normally him, basically make all the decisions. The members become more and more irrelevant as time goes by. Was it the Liberals who created this issue? No. Was it the Tories? No. Was it us? It started with all of us. At one point or another, there's been an evolution over the last 20 years in this place, as in other Parliaments across Canada and at the federal level. The Premier and a few unelected people make decisions in the Premier's office. They come into caucus and say, "Boys and girls, this is what you're going to do," and all the trained seals have to follow in behind. That doesn't make a lot of sense. We have to say yes, a government has to have the right to have its legislation, but it has to have that right based on what the actual representation of the vote should have been, and that's why I believe that a PR system of some form would be better.

I particularly like a mixed system that says you have two votes, one where you vote for the party of your choice to be the government, the other one for the local member. At the end of the day, you make the adjustments. That's what Germany and a whole bunch of other places do.

In Ontario, we have a tradition of constituencies and you can't do away with that. I don't think anybody in Ontario would stand for a PR system that would say the parties will put a list and the list people are the ones who get elected. That would never fly. You have to have a

constituency-based system, but you have to have a mixed proportional system, in my view.

On another issue, in regard to fixed-date elections, this is an initiative the government has put forward that I support. I think it makes sense. But there are some dangers with this. One is, the current bill as it stands will put us in virtual election, as the Americans are. You have to have that bill amended so that there is a real, fixed period of elections where parties, candidates and third parties—in other words, people who support candidates—can't spend money until 27 or 30 days before the actual election. If we don't put that kind of proviso in your current legislation, it will mean you're going to have all kinds of third-party advertising and the parties themselves going out and campaigning virtually for a year or a year and a half before the next provincial election. That won't serve anybody well. Members need to understand that the current bill, as it stands, is flawed.

Do I support a fixed-date election? Certainly; not a problem. But we need to make sure that the election is set in such a way that nobody can campaign until 27 days before the election, nobody can spend money until 27 days before an election and there can be no third-party advertising.

As well, we have to take a look at campaign limits. That's why I favour what the federal government has done, which is to get rid of union and corporate donations. Not a bad idea. The question is, how do you come up with a formula that's fair for all parties? How do you allow, for example, the Green Party, which has something to say in this province, to run candidates, and how do you make sure the existing parties can fare well enough to be able to run a full slate of candidates in those elections? If we are to deal with that as well, I think we're on our way to making some pretty good reforms when it comes to democracy in Ontario.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in private members' business debate this morning. Unfortunately, I don't think this is the spot where we should be discussing this important motion when we, as individual members in the opposition, have all of a minute and a half to talk about this issue. I would mention that the member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge said that he introduced this before the government made their recent announcement. I would have gladly traded my private member's bill, I think it's number 70 on the ballot list, the deposit return system. We could have been talking about something that's very important and maybe looked at solving the trash problems in this province.

I do have concerns about rushing into changing our whole system. We have a system that has worked well for 137 years. We've had stable government for 137 years. I think we should take our time and look at other systems. The member for Timmins-James Bay raised some valid concerns with our existing system, but I think what our system needs is a tune-up. It doesn't need a major overhaul; it needs a tune-up to get more involvement with the members to make it work a little bit better. But we should be very careful about rushing into a new

system that may, from a distance, from a high level, look good but does have many problems, especially when our system has worked very well.

So that, in the limited time I have, is what I would like to add to this discussion. We should look at ways of making the current system work better before making radical changes.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): This morning's motion—and it's merely a motion in private members' hour—raises a question in my mind: This is it? This is all there is to this, a private members' motion? I really raise the question, is this it? Where is the government bill? Where is the legislation? All we have here is a motion indicating that we should consider proportional representation. Where is the government legislation for us to debate? To the Liberals across the way, this was your election platform.

I know in my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, it was raised in every single all-candidates debate, raised by local Liberals. Granted, the Liberals dropped by 3,000 votes in my riding in the last election. But local Liberals, regardless, still presented this as one of their most important new initiatives.

As the member for Leeds-Grenville has indicated, what we have this morning is a sham. I'd put an "e" on the end of that word. It's a shame; it's a sham and a shame. And I ask, where's the government? Do we not get to debate a government bill? What are they afraid of? Is this going to be, perhaps down the road, slid in underneath the back door?

As with my colleagues, I just have a couple of minutes to address this issue today, to speak on the often touted, certainly during the last election, concept of proportional representation. It's a Liberal move that, as the member for Lanark-Carleton pointed out, will change the history of this province and representation in Ontario over the next hundred years. As the member indicated, 24 members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition get a total of 15 minutes to raise their constituents' concerns about what I consider this morning as an affront to democracy, this suffocation of debate, the muzzling of any detailed opposition comment this morning.

Last week, the Premier of Ontario bypassed duly elected representatives in the Legislature, making an announcement about electoral reform at a location somewhere outside of the assembly. We as opposition members were not consulted, there was no legislation presented for debate, and what we have this morning is an afterthought, shamelessly trying to cleanse this initiative of its partisan stench by holding a very brief debate in private members'—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

1100

Mr Barrett: Obviously, I've run out of the very short time I was allocated.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Arthurs, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Arthurs: I would like to list all the members who spoke in this rather limited debate of an hour—and with

that I can agree. But I'm pleased that on a Thursday morning we had some dozen members of this Legislature engaged in this particular debate.

I do agree with some of the comments made by members opposite, but let's recall that this is private members' time; this is not government time. I agree that the time available in this modest bid, an hour, is not enough to engage us all fully in the debate on democratic renewal. What I don't agree on is that the issue of getting elected is not an issue; that's one of the issues.

I agree particularly with the member from Toronto-Danforth, who made reference to the need to have terms of reference and processes well defined and structure done upfront to provide legitimacy to the process. I am in concurrence and have commented on that in other places. This particular motion is intended to set the stage, to create a process; it's not intended to establish an outcome.

It really is three parts. The first one is about how this assembly gets elected, and there's obviously a need for consideration of whether or not what we do now is the most effective means of doing that. Second, it talks about public engagement. It talks about public engagement in the context of how we get elected, but, beyond that, it creates the opportunity of a template in regard to how we engage the public on public policy issues. If we do it well on this issue, then we'll have set a template on how we're going to engage the public generally. The third part speaks about public policy and seeking advice on public policy on an ongoing basis. I think this Legislature and province would be well served by doing that.

I'm very pleased with the debate this morning and am pleased that I had the opportunity to bring this resolution forward.

HOME FIRE SPRINKLER ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LES EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES DOMICILIAIRES

Mrs Jeffrey moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 respecting home fire sprinklers / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait aux extincteurs automatiques domiciliaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mrs Jeffrey, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise in the House today in order to present Bill 141, the Home Fire Sprinkler Act, 2004, for second reading.

This week marks Home Fire Safety Week. It is a time when Canadians are asked to reflect on how best to protect their homes from fire. The purpose of the bill is to prevent the devastating loss of life and property that is caused by fire every year. This bill will require the installation of fire sprinklers in new detached, semi-detached and row houses.

Between 1999 and 2003 in Ontario, fire took the lives of 533 people and was responsible for almost \$1.6 billion in property damage. Last year alone, fire claimed the lives of 110 people and destroyed an estimated \$457 million in property. However, none of these figures adequately represents the human cost endured by families and friends whose loved ones are lost or injured due to the fire.

This bill is the culmination of over a decade of work by a dedicated firefighter. His mission: to bring proven technology of residential fire sprinklers to the Canadian public. Brian Maltby is the fire prevention division chief in Brampton, and he's the first Canadian ever to be elected to the board of directors of the fire and life safety section of the International Association Of Fire Chiefs.

There is compelling statistical evidence of the need and effectiveness of residential fire sprinklers. Residential sprinklers add fire suppression and complement the early warning capability of smoke alarms. When a fire starts, a heat-sensitive element, called a fusible link, detects the heat. Each sprinkler head responds independently, resulting in fires rarely spreading beyond the room of origin. In roughly 95% of all documented sprinkler activations, one sprinkler has been sufficient to control the fire.

At first I didn't understand why Brian was so driven, until he told me the reason why the issue of residential sprinklers had become so personal. In 1993, Brian Maltby had the unenviable task of having to tell a young mother that her two children had perished in a fire. In vain, he tried to comfort the distraught young woman. For months after that tragedy, Brian would lie awake at night thinking about that young mother and her loss and about how those two young lives were prematurely lost.

The construction of a new monument for the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association just south of the Legislature will be completed next month. It's a beautiful structure and recognizes the ultimate contribution of many brave firefighters. However, I believe that the best way to honour those fallen heroes is by ensuring that we minimize the risk for current and future firefighters.

In September 2000, Brampton firefighters responded to a residential fire. Upon arrival, the crew found the house fully engulfed. Fortunately, all of the residents were out. Larry Brooks, a 19-year career firefighter, stretched an attack hose line around the east side of the house, when suddenly the roof, east wall and block chimney collapsed, trapping Larry in the rubble.

The crew worked feverishly to pull Larry out from underneath the debris, and for a while, it was uncertain whether Firefighter Brooks would survive his injuries.

This summer, after four years of trying to save Larry's left arm, the doctors finally had to amputate it.

Today, dozens of firefighters and others affected by fire have come from all over the province to express their support for the installation of residential fire sprinklers in new homes.

In the members' gallery, we have a tireless advocate for residential fire sprinklers, Firefighter Brian Maltby.

We have Al Speed, the former fire chief of the city of Toronto, and William Stewart, the current fire chief of the city of Toronto. We have Deputy Fire Chief Terry Boyko of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, Deputy Fire Marshal Doug Crawford, and Firefighter Chris Arthey, whose home was destroyed in a fire and who installed home fire sprinklers when rebuilding his home.

Sometimes it's easy to become desensitized to the weekly reports about the number of fire deaths or injuries or the extraordinary damage that occurs in this province every year. But it's impossible to ignore the stories of people who have been affected by fires, individuals like Mr Gyamfi.

In 1999, Mr Gyamfi lost his daughter in an arson house fire in Brampton. Despite the fact that his loss is still relatively recent, he has chosen to come here today in order to show his support for residential fire sprinklers. Mr Gyamfi joins us in the members' gallery.

Applause.

Mrs Jeffrey: Thank you.

The question before us today is: How much value do we attribute to the lives of our firefighters, the lives of Ontarians and the lives of our families? I believe that we, as legislators, have a responsibility to ensure that we take a leadership role to protect Ontarians.

Fire sprinklers in new homes are affordable. On average, home fire sprinklers add only 1% to 1.5% to the total building cost in new construction. We need to encourage the same consumers who demand air bags in their cars and who spend several thousand dollars to protect their homes with electronic alarm systems to demand homes with sprinklers. The cost is insignificant when compared to the possibility of losing a loved one in a fire.

Just over two weeks ago, Ontario endured one of this year's most tragic fire incidents, in West Lincoln, Ontario. On November 8, 2004, a 39-year-old expectant mother named Monika Woerlen died from smoke inhalation with her 7 children. By the time a fire truck was able to arrive on the scene, their home was already engulfed in flames.

I'm sure I express the sentiments of this Legislature when I offer our sincere condolences to Mr Woerlen, his family and the constituents of the member for Erie-Lincoln.

Some would propose that homes in rural areas do not need fire sprinklers. However, homes that are located in remote or isolated areas are less likely to have a quick response time from emergency services, and they're the ones who most need fire sprinklers.

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It's important to understand that in most fires it's the smoke that kills, not the fire. As well, most residential fires occur when people feel the safest, asleep in their beds, usually between the hours of midnight and 6 am.

The vast majority of all residential fires today are due to behavioural causes: careless smoking, unattended cooking or children playing with fire. While we cannot prevent these behaviours, we can design sprinkler systems to control the outcome.

By the time an individual realizes their home is on fire, it's often too late to find a safe exit from the home. The smoke is blinding, you're choking and you're disoriented. Imagine the terror that faces you: the prospect of blindly trying to find a safe exit out of your home and ensuring that everyone else you love is safe.

There is now a significant body of evidence in California, Georgia, Maryland, Arizona, Washington and Vancouver. There has never been a single fire fatality in a residence with a sprinkler system where the occupants have not been in direct contact with the fire. It is time for Ontario to take a leadership role and become the first province in Canada to mandate fire sprinklers.

When I first came to Queen's Park, I remember something Premier McGuinty said to members when speaking about private members' legislation. He asked us to be courageous and to bring legislation to the table that was meaningful. I took his words to heart. I cannot think of anything more important than showing our commitment to civilian and firefighter safety.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude and appreciation to my friend Firefighter Brian Maltby. I know Brian has a dream of a day when firefighters will respond to a house fire by running into a house, turning off the water, mopping up the floor and returning safe and sound.

A wise man once said that the best time to plant a tree was 25 years ago; the second-best time is today. The best time to include residential sprinklers in the building code would have been 25 years ago. The second-best time to install residential sprinklers is today. Please join me in supporting this bill.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to respond. I know my colleagues from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and maybe some others will speak to this bill as well.

First, we welcome the opportunity to debate this bill, and congratulate the member for bringing it forward for debate. The member for Brampton Centre obviously has the best of intentions with her legislation. We welcome our guests, the fire chiefs and the distinguished men and women in the gallery here today, as part of our debate.

My third introductory comment is that I sincerely appreciate the kind words from the member on behalf of the Woerlen family and the people of Erie-Lincoln. I am proud to be a resident of West Lincoln, where the firefighters bravely tried to assist the family as best as possible, as well as the firefighters from neighbouring Pelham, who have an agreement to protect that part of West Lincoln as well.

This legislation has good intentions. We support the notion of doing whatever we can—obviously an admirable goal—to eliminate any fatalities or injuries caused by residential or business fires and, in addition to that, whatever we can do to protect our brave men and women firefighters. We had a gathering here yesterday of firefighters from across the province; the association of the chiefs are here today.

I think the question for the assembly is, if you're making an investment in protecting home safety, if

you're making an investment in terms of assisting and protecting our firefighters, what is the best way to do so? Certainly, the firefighters who visited with me yesterday—from Welland, St Catharines and Niagara Falls—talked about 1710 and 1720, two initiatives to increase the number of firefighters who can make a call on time, protect themselves and get to the property as quickly as possible. The chiefs, in their release, and the firefighters I spoke with yesterday as well, talked about the importance of smoke detectors and the fact that, sadly, some 30% of the smoke detectors aren't functioning or aren't maintained on a regular basis. Definitely an initiative in that respect would be an admirable one as well.

Similarly I do believe—and I know the member is but one of her caucus—if they were to move forward with this initiative, as part of their building code reform or by passing this particular bill through third reading—obviously we feel the government should put its money where its mouth is as well. Hopefully members opposite would support either some sort of tax credit or some sort of benefit, if this legislation passes, to assist with that cost. While a 1% to 1.5% increase in costs may not seem like a lot, I think to a good number of homeowners it could be up to \$3,500 per home, as estimated by the Canadian Home Builders' Association in a study a few years ago. For a lot of middle-class families, working families or young couples buying their first home, an additional \$3,500 could be quite expensive. I wonder if that \$3,500—if society is paying that cost—should be best invested in sprinklers, a better job of smoke detectors or a better job of hiring and training our firefighters to maintain the high quality of our service and getting more firefighters to the scene on time.

I'll stress that again: \$3,500, to a family, if that is the accurate number, can be quite expensive. The government, therefore, should support that, if this initiative does move forward, with the requisite tax break, a grant or some assistance in that regard.

Often a challenge too in these instances is when a private member's bill comes forward and there's also a government initiative underway. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is currently reviewing the building code and undergoing consultations. We believe that this bill should be part of those consultations, so that they look at the entire change and updating the building code in one fell swoop.

I hope, in the rest of the debate this morning, that I will hear a bit more about potential costs. If you're going to invest that sum of money across the province, is that the best way to support our firefighters and prevent fire damage, fatalities and injuries? Hopefully, there has been some cost-benefit analysis work done in terms of the dollars invested versus benefits, as opposed to investing those dollars in more firefighters, more training and a better education program with smoke detectors.

Those are my remarks. I look forward to my colleagues in the assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Oh, the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): How can you miss me?

The Deputy Speaker: Good question. I don't know.

Mr Bisson: I just want to say to the member across the way, I have no problem supporting this particular initiative. However, I think there'll probably be some—not so much in the construction industry but in the realty industry, who will probably have some concerns. They'll argue, I'm sure, that this is going to push up the average cost of houses in Ontario and make housing unaffordable. To them, I say, God, have you looked at the price of housing lately? I don't think a fire suppression system is going to make all that much difference.

We were talking to a number of firefighters last night at the reception about the prices of housing in, I think it was, the Stratford area. I couldn't get over what a single-family house, a three-bedroom bungalow, is going for in that community. I thought that housing was reasonable in that area. The price of houses is quite high.

I don't have a problem supporting this. I understand why the member is doing it. It's certainly a good safety initiative. I just clarified with her—I wanted to make sure, and she said yes, that in fact this would only apply to new construction. You wouldn't be talking about trying to retrofit existing housing because obviously that would be a great difficulty. You'd have to start ripping ceilings apart, which probably would not be very practical, considering that most of us don't want to take the drywall down once it's up. So it's obviously not a problem.

I do want to take this time, and I've got a bit of time, to talk about fire services generally, and I want to talk about it from the perspective of First Nations—a perspective we don't hear very often in this House.

We have a situation right now in the community of Attawapiskat where there is a primary school, J.R. Nakogee, that deals with all the education needs of all those kids from JK all the way up to grade 8. It's currently closed. It has been closed for four years. Why? Because there has been a diesel spill.

A big, long story: The federal government used to operate the power plant in that community because most of those communities were not on the hydro grid. They had to generate electricity by way of diesel generators. They had a huge spill. Diesel fuel ended up in the ground and migrated to the ground underneath the school. The federal government kept on studying it and wouldn't do anything. Those kids kept on getting sicker and sicker and, finally, the families of those children had to take the conditions into their own hands. It's pretty sad when the federal government won't respond to something as serious as that. The community had to make a decision to shut the school down. Now the situation is, for four years we've had the J.R. Nakogee Elementary School in the community of Attawapiskat shut down. Why? Because it is contaminated with diesel fuel and it is unsafe for human habitation.

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Here's an interesting point—it's all going to relate, Speaker. I promise you it's going to come back to fire

suppression systems, because that completes this story. The interesting thing is that when the federal government finally got around to taking a look at what was dangerous in the community when it came to the diesel spill, they decided to rip down the three teachers' houses that were owned by the federal government because the contamination levels were such that it put human habitation at risk. Interestingly, the level of contamination in the school was higher, and is higher, than it was inside those teachers' houses. It's interesting that the federal government saw fit to tear down the three houses occupied by teachers because it was unsafe for human habitation but was unwilling to rip down the school and remedy the current situation at the school where the pollution levels were even higher. So that sets up the first part of the story.

Now the second part of the story: They have a high school, it's called Vezina Secondary School. It houses around 300 to 400 secondary students in that community. Guess what? The fire suppression system malfunctioned and the entire school basically was destroyed because the fire suppression system, as firemen would know, has to be operated dry. You don't keep water in those things, especially in northern Ontario where it's up in the unheated attic. You pressurize the system in good weather, make sure there are no leaks, turn the system off, drain the system out and leave the water out of the system.

As a result, what happened for some reason, the system malfunctioned when they tested it last spring. We got the first frost this winter and guess what happened? The water system froze up in the attic, the pipes burst, the entire fire suppression system went off in the attic above the drywall—could you imagine? Firefighters, you know what I'm talking about. The water built up in the insulation, built up over the joists and the entire ceiling of the school started to leak in every conceivable spot. If you could think of putting a pail in that school, water was coming through the roof. As a result, they had to evacuate the school and the school has been basically demolished.

So now we've got JR Nakogee school in Attawapiskat, a community of 3,000 people, where they've got no primary school and a federal government that's done nothing and has been missing in action. I am fed up with the situation, I'll tell you, beyond means. We now have the secondary school that's been destroyed because of a fire suppression system that malfunctioned, and that school is now shut down. So the response is, "Let's find other places in the community to put the students while we study what to do."

A few members in this House have been to Attawapiskat and would know that, like most northern reserves, you've only got 15 to 20 people per house. Can you imagine having your children in your house? How many children do you have? Two, three?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: OK, so you and your husband have three kids. So you have your daily lives going on as you live in your house. All of a sudden in your community, because

there isn't enough housing, your sister doesn't have a place to live, so she's got to move in with her boyfriend or husband and their kids. And by the way, your parents don't have anywhere to live either because there's no housing in that community, so they have to move in with you as well. It is that bad.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: It's damn serious and that's not to be laughed at.

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I'm not laughing.

Mr Bisson: How we accept that kind of situation today is unbelievable, that in the country of Canada we put citizens in that situation. I won't have people in this House thinking it's funny. I invite you to Attawapiskat, sir, I invite you to Fort Albany, and I invite you to all communities across the north to go see for yourself.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Bisson: Don't come in here and start laughing—

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay, please direct your remarks through the Chair. At some point you should be speaking to the bill, as well. I understand, but you should be speaking to bill.

Mr Bisson: I am speaking to the bill because it's related to the fire suppression system in that school. My point is—and I'm saying to the member across the way, I know there's a certain sympathy within the government because we've had a number of your members come up to that community and look at it.

So imagine, now you have you, your three kids, your sister-in-law, her husband, their two kids, your mum and dad and, by the way, your oldest son just got married and he's moving in with his wife. How do your children study in that environment? How does a child find the quietness they need to study and compete with other kids in this country when it comes to education when you've got that kind of activity going on in the home? That happens each and every day in those communities, and our federal government does nothing.

I've been reading the papers lately—it's related to the fire suppression system. I want to get back to the Vezina Secondary School and the fire suppression system. I've been reading in the paper lately, in the Star and other places, there have been editorials about the Auditor General, or whatever they call Sheila whatever her name is in Ottawa—

Interjection: Fraser.

Mr Bisson: Fraser—that they're not doing a very good job managing money at Indian Affairs, INAC, when it comes to servicing those communities and that we're somehow spending more money than we should in the education system and not getting any results.

We're not getting results because these kids have nowhere to study. They can't go to their houses. Why? Because the houses are overcrowded. They have to live with extended families. There's dysfunctionality in those communities because of the residential school syndrome and everything else that has gone on. It's quite complicated. The communities will admit it. There's a high

level of abuse when it comes to alcohol, drugs and gas sniffing.

I have a resident in the community of Attawapiskat. He and his wife moved out to live in a tent all winter with their two younger children. Why? Because they don't feel secure living in the house with their older children, who are now sniffing gas. It's pretty serious stuff.

Coming back to how this relates to the Vezina school, we now have the only secondary school in the community, where those kids had some hope of trying to break the cycle and study, shut down because the fire suppression system was faulty and it has basically destroyed the school. So now we have kids in the entire community who don't have a school. They're now working out of portables on shift work, and the federal government is still studying the situation.

I want to make one call in this House. If the federal government can't do the job, they should just get the hell out of the way. It's clear that they've abandoned the First Nations in this province. They are not doing their job. I look at any other child in Ontario. You have a school that is properly built according to building codes, that has fire suppression systems that are well maintained so you don't have the kind of situation that has happened with our school up in Attawapiskat, and you have a system that says we need to make sure all children have an equal opportunity for education. At the end of the day, the only chance those kids have to break the cycle is to compete, along with every other child in this province and this country.

These people don't want welfare. They don't want to be given a handout; they want to be given a hand up, as Mike Harris used to say, to a certain extent. I'm not advocating for everything Mike Harris said, but the saying is right. Those kids want to be given an opportunity to compete with every other child out there, but we can't do that because we don't have some of the basic infrastructure.

As we stand in this Legislature today and talk about your private member's bill, which I think is really important—it's a great idea and I'll support it. Putting fire suppression systems in individual homes, new construction and semi-detached homes makes a lot of sense. I want people to remember that there is a whole segment of our society—God, they'd just be happy to have a house; they'd be happy to have an apartment. They have none.

I see my good friend the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is here. He's had the opportunity to meet, along with myself, with a few of the chiefs from up north. We talked about the need to find some way to provide housing dollars for those communities because it's clear the federal government is not doing it.

Am I saying we should let the federal government off the hook? Certainly not. They have a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations and, as such, have to make sure they go through with their responsibility to those communities. But we need to figure out as a province how to make those First Nations people in the northern and other

parts of our province real citizens, active citizens, equal citizens.

Now I want to get to fire services. I want to tell the firefighters who are here, imagine that you work in a fire department up in Fort Albany, Attawapiskat, Peawanuk, wherever it might be. You haven't got a fire truck—no such thing. You probably don't even have a uniform. You have a fire. All you have is the goodwill of a lot of volunteers trying to do the right thing. In some communities there may be a water distribution system that allows you to have a fire hydrant. There may not be a maintenance department within the community because they don't have the budget to make sure the fire hydrants are working properly.

You know, in your communities, that you have public works people who go out and check to make sure the fire hydrants are functional so that if there is a fire, they can actually plug your pumper truck into it and use the water to put out the fire. In most of those communities, (a) you don't have a fire truck; (b) if you have a fire truck, you don't have the fire hall to put it in—can you imagine that? You'll go and get your fire truck, it's 40 below zero outside and it's full of snow, and you're going to go out and fight a fire. And (c), in most cases the basic infrastructure doesn't work.

When First Nations fire departments try to get money to train their firefighters—you know that for professional and volunteer firefighters, firefighting is a very serious business. It's very technical. It's not a job where somebody can walk in and say, "I'm a fireman. Give me a hat, give me my hose and I'll go out and fight a fire." It's a very scientific, very technical thing and people need to know what they're doing. We don't even have the basic dollars to train the firefighters to do their jobs. I'm not saying that all First Nations firefighters are no good. They're very well intentioned, and some communities are more organized than others. I look at Moose Factory, a very different situation than, let's say, Kashechewan or Big Trout Lake.

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The point is, again, a federal government asleep on the job, not paying attention to their responsibility to First Nations, and we have a fire marshal's office in Ontario that has no jurisdiction. I say again, if the federal government doesn't want to do the job, get the heck out of the way. Those communities are in Ontario. Put them under the fire marshal's act so that we have some real standards that we can then enforce in those communities and make sure their fire services are functioning.

Imagine that you're a police officer: same story. I was in one community and brought our critic, Peter Kormos, one day. I've forgotten where it was. It might have been Ogoki or Martin Falls or wherever; I don't remember. He says that as a critic for justice he goes to the NAPS people; that's Nishnawbe-Aski policing. Those are the police officers in those communities. He asked, "When you have an emergency where somebody has, let's say, drowned or is in danger and you've got to go out and get them, what do you have for emergency services?" Do

you know what they had? They had a boat—no motor—and it didn't even have paddles; they had a boat. Now tell me: As a firefighter, how do you save somebody who's drowning in a river because they fell through the ice, or try to get some child off the ice in the fall or spring, when all you've got is a boat that doesn't have a motor, that doesn't even have oars? And why? Because they didn't have enough money. The only thing they got shipped to them was a boat.

I'm just saying that if the feds don't want to do it, give us, as the province, the money, get the heck out of the way, and we will make sure we make First Nations real partners when it comes to what we signed their treaties for in Ontario.

Am I upset? I apologize if I got mad at you. Maybe I didn't hear everything you said, but I take this really seriously. I am sick and tired, fed up, with what the federal government is not doing for aboriginal people. Any opportunities that I have to stand up in this House and tell people just how shocking conditions are in our communities, yes, I am going to take them and I make absolutely no apologies.

I do apologize to the member for one thing. I wish I could have spoken more on your actual bill, but you know you've got my support. I had to use this opportunity.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join the debate with respect to this legislation. I noticed, though, that the legislation is restricted to new detached houses, semi-detached houses or row houses. I'm not really clear on why the member has restricted it to those particular areas, considering that people also reside in newly constructed apartment buildings. There's also the non-profit housing that is going to be constructed. There are also condominiums that people would live in.

She may have the answer. It may be that they are covered by that; I have no idea. I think that's something for her to answer in terms of why she has limited the application of her bill to detached or semi-detached homes or row housing. By row housing, she may mean link housing; I'm not sure. I think that's correct. That's one area.

The other area that is important to look at is enforcement in terms of smoke alarms. I know they do have a mandatory requirement with respect to smoke alarms in our city of Barrie, but on the same point, I don't know how well that's enforced. I don't know how well it's enforced all across the province. You can have as many laws as you want, but if they're not enforced, then it doesn't make any sense to have them. You have to have laws that can be enforced no matter how much merit there is with respect to the law.

I don't know how much consultation she's had with city councils or municipalities. I don't know whether there's any endorsement in terms of whether they have the funding, in terms of the bylaw enforcement officers or the fire marshal's office within the communities, whether they're going to be able to enforce this. It seems,

from the comments I heard from my friend from Erie-Lincoln, picking up on smoke detectors, which are a relatively simple technology to maintain, that a recent release by the fire chief stated that as many as 30% of residential smoke alarms were not working in one region of Ontario.

A home sprinkler system would be more complicated, and the issue of whether it works or whether it malfunctions is serious, because we have to look at it from the point of a resale. What's going to happen on the resale? We know that insurance companies have taken a much tougher line with respect to the technology and the state of the equipment that's in your house, whether they are going to approve providing insurance for certain types of plumbing systems, certain types of wiring systems, and now you add something else on to this in terms of whether the insurance industry is going to be prepared to cover situations where it's not properly maintained. I think that's a fundamental issue.

There are issues with respect to enforcement. There are issues with respect to the insurance industry. There are certainly issues with respect to the limited application of what she's trying to accomplish here. And I'm sure she's got answers. I know this is going to go to committee hearings.

Also, we should be looking at whether she would consider making it a mandatory purchase option, making it an option that builders have to offer their clients so you have consent for this particular type of system that would be put into a new home, for example.

I have to look at this from the point of view of a cost-benefit analysis, with input from new homebuyers and the new home warranty system. A lot of consultation needs to go into this. I'm sure the member is aware of this, and I'm sure that she's going to do that, because she's a former city councillor in Brampton and would understand how this should be done.

Those are all the comments I have on this bill.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'll be sharing my time with the members from Oakville and Niagara Falls. I want to thank the member from Brampton Centre for bringing this bill forward.

Since the amalgamation of Toronto seven years ago, our city has seen a total of 139 fire deaths. I had the opportunity to speak to our city of Toronto fire chief, Bill Stewart, and deputy chief, Rick Simpson, yesterday. They told me that most, if not all, of these victims would have been saved had their homes or buildings been equipped with automatic sprinklers. That's just Toronto. Looking across the province, close to 100 people on average die in fires every year.

A number of years ago, I had the opportunity, as chair of the city of Toronto's community services committee, to join Fire Chief Al Speed, who's also here today, in launching our city's war on fire. This was a series of actions, recommendations and fire prevention strategies that helped bring about the turnaround in fire fatalities in Toronto, including a recommendation to the province to consider making fire suppression sprinklers mandatory in

all new buildings. The leadership of Chief Speed, and the continued leadership of Chief Stewart, has made a difference in Toronto, but there's more that we have to do.

For the most part, fire fatalities have been decreasing but, as I said, there is more we can do. Automatic fire sprinkler systems work, plain and simple. There's no denying it. I've seen no data to suggest anything otherwise. Lives are being saved in places like Vancouver, which has led the country by making automatic fire suppression sprinkler systems mandatory. The results there speak for themselves: zero fire deaths in buildings that have had these sprinkler systems installed. In all, 220 jurisdictions across North America are protecting their people and their families from the ravages of fire through the mandatory implementation of sprinkler systems in homes.

Nobody here is suggesting retrofitting current housing. That would be great, it would be desirable, but we know that it would likely be cost-prohibitive. But if we can know that we can save lives by making sprinkler systems mandatory in new homes, surely that's something we should be considering.

This is not a new idea. Let me share with you the long and painful history of recommendations from coroner's inquest to coroner's inquest since 1989: December 1989, the Cann inquest; June 1992, the Deslaurier inquest; January 1994, the McNutt inquest; January 1995, the Florio inquest; May 1996, the Simmonds inquest; March 1995, the Pinkerton inquest; January 1998, the McLeod inquest; June 1997, the Davis inquest; August 1998, the Fedoruk inquest; January 1999, the Benson inquest; April 2001, the Shaw inquest; January 2001, the Patrick inquest; May 2001, the Wilson inquest; and I'm sure there are many more that I wasn't aware of.

Every one of these inquests concluded that the province should consider making sprinkler systems mandatory in homes. It's time to bring an end to this long recession of inquests and deaths. It's time to give serious consideration to making automatic sprinkler systems mandatory.

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Is cost a factor? Of course it is. We don't want to impose more costs on the building industry. This is a key industry in our economy. It creates thousands of jobs. A healthy building industry leads to a healthy economy. So we must be sensitive to the concerns of the building industry. That's why we should consider doing something like they've done in Vancouver, where they've been able to remove 30 pages of their building code, saving builders money by reducing building code requirements if sprinkler systems are in place. This has simplified their building code and reduced the impact on the building industry caused by making sprinklers mandatory. It's something I think we should be considering.

Finally, I agree with Toronto Fire Chief Bill Stewart on the need to extend mandatory sprinkler systems not only to low-rise buildings but to high-rise as well. But I recognize that we have to start somewhere, and this bill is

an excellent way to focus that discussion and consideration of this important issue.

At the end of the day, there is no more important responsibility for any government than the safety and security of our people. Today we have a bill before us that, if passed, will certainly save lives. I commend the member for Brampton Centre for bringing this to our attention and for bringing this bill forward, and I'm pleased to support it.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to this bill this morning. I do want to commend the member for Brampton Centre for bringing forth this piece of legislation. I don't happen to support it, but I do support her as a member. I know she's very passionate in what she does and she represents her constituency very well.

I also want to welcome the members of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs here this morning. I understand that they support the member in what she's doing, and we certainly support you in the good work that you and your membership do. However, I have some concerns and reservations about this bill.

Number one, I'm one who believes in a person's freedom to make choices. I've read the briefs that the member provided us with, and we appreciate that. She gave a lot of evidence and statistics about why fire suppression systems would be a positive step. Having read all those and having had some previous knowledge of how the systems work, I could very well, if I were building a new home, make the choice to go ahead and put a fire suppression system in. It would be my decision whether or not to invest that extra \$3,500 or \$4,000 to do so, but that would be my choice based on the evidence as it's presented to me. I think a much better way of doing this would be, if there was a mandatory option offered, that if the association of home builders or contractors in general had to offer this to all new home builders as a possibility or an option in erecting that new home, that would be more positive.

Also, if you have that much confidence in what you're offering, you should be able to sell it to people as a positive choice for them to make; not that it should be legislated on them, but a positive choice for them to make, that they will be doing themselves and their families a service and also preserving the physical home itself, should a fire break out.

Another thing I have a very significant concern about is the insurance aspect of what this might do. We might say that insurance companies are probably going to be offering reductions in insurance premiums to homes that have these systems in place, but you know the old saying: for every action there's an equal reaction. The homes that don't have these systems could end up paying a penalty for not having those systems in place—the existing homes. It'll be a long time before we have more new homes erected than we have homes already in existence.

On the sale of a home, oftentimes the insurance company doesn't kick up a big fuss about it. They've got a current customer in place. However, when that home is

resold, they go through an inspection process. They go through there with a fine-toothed comb, and there are lots of things they can look at in that home. Having been in the real estate business, I know this very well. They go through the home and then they say, "We won't insure this home because of this, this and that." Sometimes they're rectifiable and sometimes it's much more difficult to do just that.

We don't know that, a few years down the road, the insurance company is not going to look at this, because they do some strange things and they are driven by the profit motive—if they give a rebate on one side of the equation, they have to make up for that on another. They may go to home buyers and say, "Oh, I'm sorry, but we can't insure that older home because it doesn't have a fire suppression system, which, as you know, is the law in Ontario now for all new homes." So I have a concern that those people are going to be left with the short end of the stick. I don't know what the cost would be of a retrofit to put this into a home, but it would be astronomical. As you know, whenever you try to do something in an existing building, the costs escalate dramatically.

Those are the concerns I have with this. I think we should be selling this on the basis of its merits. If a suppression system is a good thing, then wise home builders will be marketing that and wise people who are building a home, on an individual basis, will give very strong consideration to whether or not they should put a fire suppression system in their home. If they want to have all the best protection, that may be a choice they make.

I have a concern about young people today. Some of the things that this government has done have made the cost of owning a home go up dramatically. This will add to that. Owning a home in this country and this province is getting tougher and tougher for people starting out in life because of the cost of development charges and all those kinds of things. In rural Ontario, for example—we passed Bill 26 yesterday. It's a disaster. It stops development in rural Ontario and puts a real noose around it, and it's going to add to the cost of building new homes. If we add this to it, it only escalates that further.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join this debate today. I think this is one of the better private members' bills I've seen come forward, and I certainly want to compliment the member from Brampton Centre for bringing forward Bill 141, the Home Fire Sprinkler Act.

When you're creating legislation, there comes a time when you'd like to do everything. You'd like to protect every home, in this case, in Ontario. But what I think the member has brought forward is a sensible and practical idea that says that, as we continue to build homes, we should pay attention to the expert advice that has been given to us by inquest after inquest, telling us how we can save lives. The member's bill would accomplish exactly what the inquests have been talking about.

People have said that a retrofit to an existing home, to put a sprinkler system in, could be expensive, and I agree

with that point of view. It could be expensive in a lot of circumstances. But it's a good first step. I think we should at least join a jurisdiction like the city of Vancouver and over 200 other jurisdictions in North America that have decided that it's in the best interests of their citizens and the taxpayers within their jurisdictions that a fire sprinkler system be installed in new housing. I think there can't help but be insurance savings inherent in the installation of a system such as this. I don't have that fact in front of me, but it's something that just makes common sense and I think should be supported.

I think one of the key signs of a civilized society in this modern, urban era that we live in is the emergency services we provide to each other as a society. One major component of that is in our fire protection and in the wonderful men and women who provide that fire protection: the firefighters of our community. I applaud them and I applaud their presence here today.

Sometimes, points get driven home to you pretty hard. In my own community, in 1998, we had a horrible tragedy that I believe, and the inquest that followed that tragedy believed, could have been prevented. It resulted in the deaths of three young people and one mother. It took place on August 15, 1998.

They talk about response times when they go into inquests and when you're planning fire protection and you want to know how quickly, from the time that an emergency call is made, you can have a fire truck or a police car or an ambulance on the scene. In this case, we're talking about a fire truck.

1150

What the inquest found out when it did the investigation was that a woman from the home called the fire department at 4:01 and said, "I have a fire in my house," and then the line went dead. Fire trucks were on scene within four minutes. By 4:05, the fire trucks were on scene. The police officer who attended could hear the people in the house. The fire protection personnel who were there were unable to rescue the people from the house, even though they knew, when they were on the perimeter of the fire on the outside of that house, there were still live people in that house, and they couldn't reach them.

By the time 4:18 came along, they had two bodies on the front lawn. By the time 4:28 came along, they had two more bodies. They were able to perform CPR, they were able to transfer them to some of the local hospitals and they were able to revive them. Within 36 hours, they all died. They didn't die from the fire; they died from the effects of smoke inhalation.

This issue went on to inquest, obviously. I have first-hand knowledge of not only the traumatic experience that the family underwent, that the surviving members of the family underwent, but also of the firefighters who attended at that scene, the firefighters who heard the voices and were unable to reach the people they dedicated their lives to saving.

This clearly is an example of a situation where, had that home had fire sprinklers in it, those four people

would still be alive today and that experience would not be haunting the members of the firefighting profession in my community, who needed some degree of counselling after this event took place.

It simply is something whose time has come. Whether it comes by form of a government bill or whether it comes by form of a private member's bill I don't think really matters any more. But what I'm standing here today to do is to implore you to support this bill and to applaud the member from Brampton Centre, who has had the common sense and the compassion to bring this bill forward for your consideration and support.

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to be part of today's debate. The debate is quite simple: It's about saving lives at no cost to the government. In fact, the government will make money on taxes and save money in health and social expenditures through Bill 141, the Home Fire Sprinkler Act.

As we all have heard today already, fire kills more people in Canada annually than all natural disasters combined. In fact, more than 100 individuals perish in fires each year, and ironically, most fire deaths—75%—occur in the very place where we feel the safest: our homes.

Home fires often happen at night when people are sleeping. In less than four minutes, a room can become engulfed in flames before anyone awakes, as we've just heard. Those most at risk are the very young and the older adults, who have difficulty making a quick escape.

Although smoke detectors are essential in every household, they are designed to detect, not control, a fire. Home fire sprinklers complement a detector's work, providing a way to fight flames immediately. In less time than it would take most fire departments to arrive on the scene, home fire sprinklers can contain and even extinguish a fire. There's less damage, and less chance of deadly smoke and gases reaching your family. Home fire sprinkler systems save lives, reduce property loss and can even help cut homeowners' insurance premiums.

Not only do home fire sprinklers, used in combination with smoke detectors, dramatically reduce the risk of home fire deaths, they also decrease fire damage by as much as two thirds in residences with fire sprinklers when compared to those without them. It's really like having your own firefighter standing by.

Recent sprinkler technology breakthroughs make sprinklers more affordable and easier to install in homes. With a variety of unobtrusive designs today, sprinklers fit inconspicuously into interior design. And sprinkler systems usually operate off domestic water supply.

Home fire sprinkler systems often cost less than cabinet upgrades, new carpeting or other major purchases in new home construction. Estimated costs of home sprinkler systems right now are about 1% to 1.5% of the total cost of home construction.

Fire sprinklers can also be installed in existing homes.

Because the fire sprinkler system reacts so quickly, it can dramatically reduce the heat, flames and smoke produced in a fire. Home fire sprinklers release only 10 to 26 gallons of water per minute and only at the direct

site of the fire. In a home without sprinklers, the fire department often arrives after the fire has grown to dangerous levels, and at that point several hose streams must be applied to the fire at as much as 125 gallons per minute for each hose. The resulting water damage is actually much lower with home fire sprinklers.

In residences with sprinkler systems, 90% of the fires are contained by the operation of just one sprinkler. Sprinklers keep fires small.

It is a significant bill. In my community, I'm proud to say that because of my involvement on city council, I have had the opportunity to work with our full-time fire department and volunteers. I have had the opportunity to discuss, back in my own riding, what their personal opinions of these systems are, and they have assured me without any hesitation that it is the right thing, that it will make homes safer.

It is time we join with the other 200 jurisdictions and make sprinklers mandatory in our new homes, just like we already have in apartments, office buildings and schools. Really, why should we not ensure that one of the places where we spend most of our time, where our children are, where our family are, where are friends and relatives are, is a safe place to be at any time?

I too want to compliment my colleague from Brampton Centre, Linda Jeffery, for bringing forward this bill. It is significant. This is the place where it should be brought forward and I'm pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Mrs Jeffrey, you have up to two minutes to reply.

Mrs Jeffrey: I would like to thank the members from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Erie-Lincoln, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and Timmins-James Bay for their comments and their passion. I would also like to thank my colleagues from Scarborough Centre, Oakville and Niagara Falls. I'm grateful they took the time to talk so thoughtfully about the legislation.

What I would like to do is focus on three messages that I would like people to think about following this debate.

This bill is designed to protect what we value most. We have a collective responsibility to protect the health and safety of Ontarians.

We know that sprinklers complement the early warning capability of smoke alarms by adding fire suppression.

We need to encourage and educate consumers about residential fires. Our future depends on it. We need to embrace this proven technology to protect all Ontarians.

Last year we lost over 100 people. These were mothers, fathers, children. Over time, we have lost heroes in our communities—firefighters. We need to ensure that the risk for future and current firefighters is minimized.

I want to remind everybody that there has never been a single fire fatality in a residence with a sprinkler system where the occupants have not been in direct contact with the fire.

I want to repeat myself: The best time to include residential sprinklers in the building code would have

been 25 years ago. The second best time for this Legislature to make a decision that would reflect on all of us forever would be to install residential sprinklers today.

I would appreciate your support on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will first deal with ballot item number 41, standing in the name of Mr Arthurs.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There will be a vote on this, and we will deal with it after the next ballot item.

HOME FIRE SPRINKLER ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LES EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES DOMICILIAIRES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 42, standing in the name of Mrs Jeffrey. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Pursuant to standing order number 96, this—

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): Mr Speaker, I move that we forward this to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? It will be done. Agreed.

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 41. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1205.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Arthurs has moved private members' notice of motion number 30.

All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Caplan, David
Craitor, Kim
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter

Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John

Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Patten, Richard
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Cameron
Klees, Frank
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Runciman, Robert W.

Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 13.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair, and the House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to be here today and to have an opportunity to do a statement on a children's treatment centre for York region and the county of Simcoe.

We had a rally last Monday at my office and 70 or 80 people showed up with signs in a very non-spirited manner. They were basically there to rally support behind all the MPPs who sit for the county of Simcoe and the region of York.

I want to emphasize again—and we've done this over and over again with petitions—that this is the only area of the province that does not have a children's treatment centre. The coalition has been formed up there and has done an extremely good job of working with all of the stakeholders to put a very good proposal before, originally, the Ministry of Health; now, of course, that's been shifted to the minister responsible for children's services, Minister Bountrogianni.

With the growth in our area, I can't emphasize enough to the folks who sit in cabinet and all the MPPs how very, very important this is for our young people. There are 23,000 children, as I said, who may require treatment; 6,000 of them are specialized. We have a number of careers at stake as well, with some of our pediatricians and other health care stakeholders.

So I urge the minister responsible, Minister Bountrogianni, but primarily Minister Sorbara, who is handling the finances—he is an MPP in York region, and they are counting on him to work with the other MPPs to make sure that the young people receive the services they need with a children's treatment centre for York region and the county of Simcoe.

I appreciate the opportunity to put this on the record today.

TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): This past Monday, the McGuinty government demonstrated its commitment to reducing gridlock by investing in public transit and investing in our cities. Our government, in conjunction with GO Transit, will dramatically improve GO Transit services by building a new Milliken GO station and parking lot in my riding of Markham.

The new and modern building will be built on Red Lea Avenue and will include close to 700 parking spaces. The new Milliken station will enable more passengers to get on and off the train as a result of the strategic location. This much-needed solution will greatly ease traffic congestion, and it's welcome news for the people of Markham. By demonstrating a strong commitment to public transit, the McGuinty government is making commuting more convenient.

The building of the new Milliken GO station and parking lot is also welcome news for the business community. The GTA is the economic engine for Ontario and Canada. However, all too often traffic gridlock results in lost business, particularly in Markham, where traffic congestion is at an all-time high. The Markham Board of Trade has repeatedly echoed this concern, citing "gridlock as having a negative impact on productivity and economic competitiveness."

Monday's announcement of the new Milliken GO station and parking lot for Markham shows our government is once again creating real, positive change for cities. This is good news for the commuters and business community of Markham.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I hope you might indulge members of the House who are coming in with white and purple ribbons today, both of them representing organizations that are supporting ending violence against women, and that we could have permission to wear them today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): You're asking for unanimous consent for members to wear the ribbons. Do we have unanimous consent?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Yes, we do, but on the same point of order—

The Speaker: We have unanimous consent.

You had a point of order?

Mr Bisson: Just to be clear, I would want to make sure that those ribbons are available in the opposition lobbies. I didn't see them when I went through.

The Speaker: I'm sure that the minister will make them available.

Members' statements?

PORT DOVER

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My hometown of Port Dover has been snubbed. It's been dissed by the Liberals—deleted. They've been telling us that we are not memorable; we are not worthy.

You know, that doesn't matter, because 300,000 tourists came to visit us this year, and 300,000 tourists will come to visit us next year, just as millions of visitors over the past century have travelled "over to Dover," by train from Brantford, by ferry from Erie, and down the plank road from Hamilton.

However, this government, through the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership, has classified Dover as non-memorable. We have been erased from government memory, deprogrammed. I think a McGuinty minion has pressed the delete button. Apparently, we don't exist and we never did: no beach, no perch, no foot-long, no Harleys, no Lighthouse theatre, no dairy bar, no Maple Leaf, no Harbour Museum, no hotels, no Golden Glow, no chips, no fish tugs, no sailboats and no July 1 parade, the longest-running Dominion Day parade in Canada.

In spite of what this government may think, we are memorable. I wish to thank the government for all the Port Dover media attention that this decision has garnered.

Dover won't give up without a fight: Phone 1-800-699-9038 or e-mail tourism@norfolkcounty.on.ca. Thanks for the memories.

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): November is woman abuse awareness month. Today I want to draw particular attention to the fact that the Ontario Liberals have broken a promise to all women and children in this province who find themselves trapped in a nightmare of domestic violence. Before the 2003 election, the Liberals promised to build second-stage housing. It appears to have been a cynical and empty promise.

The lack of second-stage housing is a huge concern in my city of Hamilton, as it is across the province. The McGuinty Liberals, like the Conservatives before them, have not invested in the most important aspect of helping women escape the cycle of violence, and that is housing.

The member from Hamilton Mountain, when in opposition as a women's issues critic, was a staunch advocate of second-stage housing, but her support has fallen like a house of cards. In 2002, the member said, "Under a Dalton McGuinty government, we will reinstate second-stage housing." Here, in 2004, it's just another broken promise.

Funding for second-stage housing in Hamilton is woefully inadequate. Phoenix Place will likely have to close its doors by December 31 of this year. This outstanding service received \$40,000, it's true, to hire staff and write reports. That's all very well and good, but what about the bricks and mortar?

Second Stage Services received nothing from this government. They have, in fact, had to downsize their units, notwithstanding the fact that they had been repeatedly promised an introduction of strong programs of second-stage housing construction.

Last year, shelters in Hamilton turned away thousands of women seeking refuge from violence. I shudder to think how many more will be turned away because this government has failed to keep one of its bedrock commitments to the women and children of Ontario.

DIABETES

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I rise today to speak about diabetes, a very serious illness that affects over 850,000 people in Ontario, approximately 85,000 of whom are insulin-dependent. November is Diabetes Awareness Month.

While people with diabetes only make up approximately 6% of Ontario's population, they happen to account for 32% of heart attacks, 30% of strokes, 51% of new kidney dialysis patients and 70% of amputations.

Friends, these are alarming statistics, but there is good news: Diabetes complications can largely be prevented or significantly delayed with proper management of the disease. I know; I am a diabetic.

As legislators, we can do this by taking steps to alleviate the financial burden of diabetes on individuals and families and by ensuring access to medication, supplies and devices, as well as access to diabetes health care services. We're making progress but we have so much more to do.

This coming Monday, November 29, the diabetes association will be holding a reception and information session here at Queen's Park from 12 to 1:30 in committee room 2. I am pleased to be co-sponsoring this reception with my colleagues Elizabeth Witmer and Shelly Martel.

I encourage all my colleagues to attend so we can find out more about the good work of the diabetes association and how to combat this combatable disease.

1340

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Everyone in Ontario knows we have a crisis in our film industry. The industry has been hard hit over the last several years and this government has failed to keep its election promise to increase tax credits to 33%.

But the landscape in the last few months has begun to shift even more dramatically. The vastly increased Canadian dollar is a threat to film production in Toronto. Many of the small businesses that supply the industry may not survive if production declines even further. Ontarians need to know from this Liberal government: What is your strategy to preserve our film industry in the next six to 12 months?

We are talking about real people facing a crisis. I personally know set designers, caterers, hair dressers and a stunt man in my riding who depend on the film industry.

Small businesses all over Ontario could be in trouble. Wayne Ford is the owner of Mar-Lyn Lumber in Ajax, a small business that employs 10 people. Mar-Lyn is one of the largest suppliers of construction materials for movie sets in the Toronto area, working with about 85% of productions. Wayne and his employees do good work, yet Wayne is certain that he is likely to go out of business with the current crisis in the film industry.

With Christmas a month away, I ask this Liberal government, what message should I give to Wayne, his employees and their families about what the government is doing to save jobs in the film industry?

RIDE PROGRAM

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): The holiday season fast approaching marks the beginning of the annual holiday RIDE program, or Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere. In fact, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services was on hand earlier today at Variety Village in Scarborough to launch the holiday RIDE campaign for the GTA.

Every holiday season, the fine men and women who make up Ontario's police forces are out in full force to ensure we all get home safe after celebrating with family and friends. It is no longer acceptable to drink and then drive. The RIDE program has played a major role in deterring this behaviour by taking dangerous people off our roadways and highways, not just during the holiday season but also year-round.

In the past nine years, provincially assisted RIDE programs have provided more than 57,000 police-hours for spot checks in Ontario. The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services provides \$1.2 million in funding annually to supplement the RIDE spot checks.

MADD Canada will also be out spreading their message this holiday season through their red ribbon campaign that asks the public to tie a red ribbon to their car antenna to spread awareness and to remember those who have fallen victim to drunk drivers.

The McGuinty government believes in being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. As such, this government is committed to working with MADD and other road safety partners to combat impaired driving. I would like to salute the officers, as well MADD Canada, for these efforts.

LEARNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): They say that youth are the leaders of tomorrow. Today I will give two examples that challenge that saying. Youth are not just the leaders of tomorrow, they are the leaders of today as well.

Youth like Jocelyn Land-Murphy and Jessica Lax, co-founders of Otesha Project, are spreading their message to schools across the York Region District School Board of how individual actions can create a better world for everyone.

They were part of a forum that was organized by Learning for a Sustainable Future, a national non-profit group that is helping educators and governments link education to action when it comes to the environment. The forum allows students not only to understand the importance of the environment, but gives them a framework to start thinking about the environment as part of their decision-making process.

Education is key to ensuring that our youth know how to protect the environment they live in, and this forum is a great example of that.

1350

As we continue debate on the greenbelt, as we look to renewable energy to keep the lights on, as we push for strong protection of our water resources, and as we invest in public transportation, we understand the importance of being able to make decisions based on a three-fold bottom line: looking at environmental, economic and social factors. Teaching these same decision-making skills to our youth will ensure that not only can our youth make educational decisions in the future but they can make them today. Here is to today and to the future.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): When you are a little kid, days are divided into two categories. You're either having a good day or you're having a bad day. Today is a good day for the youngest learners in this province because this government's commitment to giving our children the best possible start in life starts today.

Earlier today we announced that we are expanding early learning and child care to provide a full day of learning and child care for 4- and 5-year-olds in this province. We are building a system of early learning and child care that will give our children the best chance at future success.

"This government's plan is critical to Ontario's moving ahead as a province." That was said by Dr Jean Clinton of McMaster University. She said, "Evidence shows that quality early learning and care, in combination with positive nurturing by parents, is crucial to healthy child development and has a significant and long-lasting impact."

Margaret McCain, the co-author of the Ontario Early Years report, says, "This program is a fulfillment of everything we envisioned in 1998 with our Early Years Study. This was our vision and hope for Ontario, and indeed Canada."

If Ontario is going to be a leader in science, commerce and culture tomorrow, we need to be a leader in early childhood development today.

We are also moving ahead with programs to give access to child care subsidies for more children, infant

screening programs and hearing, speech and language programs for more young children across the province. We will be moving forward in steps with our federal and municipal partners and dedicated service providers and parents.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (CERTIFICATION), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (ACCREDITATION)

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to certification of trade unions / Projet de loi 151, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui a trait à l'accréditation des syndicats.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carried? Carried.

Mr Kormos?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The bill amends the Labour Relations Act, 1995, to allow the Ontario Labour Relations Board to certify a trade union as the bargaining agent of the employees in a bargaining unit without directing a representation vote if it is satisfied that more than 55% of the employees in the bargaining unit are members of the trade union on the date on which the application is made. Under the present act, a representation vote is required in those circumstances.

Also, the board may hold a hearing when considering an application for certification, whereas under the present act the board is not allowed to hold a hearing in those circumstances.

LABOUR RELATIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (SUCCESSOR RIGHTS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (SUCCESSION AUX QUALITÉS)

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 152, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, 1993 with respect to successor rights / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et la Loi de 1993 sur la négociation collective des employés de la Couronne en ce qui concerne la succession aux qualités.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Under section 69 of the Labour Relations Act, 1995, if an employer who is bound by a collective agreement with respect to

employees sells a business, the person to whom the business is sold is still bound by the collective agreement. The bill amends the act to extend the application of that section to a situation where a contractor who provides services at a premises is replaced by another contractor who provides substantially similar services at the same premises.

The bill amends the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, 1993, to make section 69 of the Labour Relations Act, 1995, applicable to crown employees and employees of agencies of the crown covered by the former act. The bill, when passed, will permit Mr McGuinty to say that he has kept at least one promise he made to working people in Ontario.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Thursday, November 25, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Caplan has moved government notice of motion 231. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it. Carried.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion:

That the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and the standing committee on finance and economic affairs be authorized to meet in the morning and following routine proceedings on Wednesday, December 1, 2004.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is there consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Caplan: I thank the House.

I move that the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and the standing committee on finance and economic affairs be authorized to meet in the morning and following routine proceedings on Wednesday, December 1, 2004.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

CONSIDERATION OF BILLS

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting Bills 25 and 73.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is there consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Caplan: I move that the application of standing order 74 to the following two bills be suspended: Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising; and Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads.

The Speaker: Mr Caplan seeks unanimous consent to move the following motion:

That the application of standing order 74 to the following two bills be suspended: Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising; and Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOLF STRATEGY

STRATÉGIE SUR LES LOUPS

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): Before I start today, I'd like to recognize some people who helped work with the ministry on what I'm announcing today. In the east members' gallery are Josh Matlow and Melissa Tkachyk from Earthroots, and in the west members' gallery I see Jean Langlois from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Ottawa Valley chapter, and Rick Smith from Environmental Defence Canada. I know Terry Quinney from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters was with me; I don't see Terry at the moment, but he was with me at the announcement just a few moments ago.

I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to inform the members of this government's intention to enhance the conservation of Ontario's wolves. The McGuinty government is putting forward the strongest measures ever taken in this province to conserve and protect our wolf population. We are living up to our campaign commitment to protect Ontario's wolves. Earlier today, I announced that we are proposing to implement Ontario's first province-wide wolf strategy. We are also recommending the first province-wide regulations to limit wolf hunting in Ontario.

Today's proposals build on the steps already taken to protect the eastern wolf in the Algonquin Provincial Park area. Members may recall that I announced a ban on the hunting and trapping of wolves in and around the park last May. The goal of our actions at that time was to ensure that wolves continue to play an important and valued role in the natural ecosystems wherever they live in the province. Our actions will also help ensure that we have the information and scientific data we need to keep Ontario's wolf populations healthy and sustainable.

During July, August and September of this year, ministry staff met with a number of our stakeholder groups to discuss wolf conservation. We learned a lot from those discussions, and it went into the proposed strategy I'm putting forward today. We very much appreciate the valuable feedback we received from all the participants. The proposed wolf strategy would, number one, develop and implement a research and monitoring program to determine the status of wolf populations in the province. It would also require that wolf and coyote hunters in northern and central Ontario purchase a special game seal in addition to the small game licence, and the number of game seals would be limited to two per hunter per year. We would also require mandatory reporting by hunters about wolf and coyote hunting. We'd also apply a closed hunting and trapping season, from April 1 to September 14, for wolves and coyotes in northern and central Ontario. Today I'm also proposing to set up a committee of representatives from various stakeholder groups to review the results of these proposed changes when new data become available.

The wolf strategy and the proposed regulation changes are being posted today on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry for public review. Over the next 40 days, members of the public are encouraged to submit their comments on these two proposals. We will carefully consider that public input before the strategy is finalized.

I believe we owe it to future generations to act now to conserve and safeguard Ontario's biodiversity, and I'm pleased that my government is moving forward with the protection of Ontario's wolves. The wolf measures I am proposing today will contribute to the protection of our biodiversity and to a healthier natural environment for our province, and they will help ensure that this magnificent animal continues to live and thrive in Ontario's wilderness.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It's not surprising that the ministry is moving forward when the ministry's own data specifically states that the wolf population is considered healthy. Yet special interest groups have been constantly pushing for this exact move with an international campaign, with communication coming from all around the world on this very issue.

Even the Algonquin wolf study specifically stated that the population was being harvested at a 30% to 40% harvest rate within those areas with no negative impact. The current harvest rates of over 5% are having no impact at all, yet with a 5% or 6% harvest rate, we're getting the changes that are taking place today. The largest impact on wolves is genetic degradation from inbreeding with coyotes, and that's where the wolf population itself will have its major fall.

The minister spoke of meeting with the stakeholders, except that the two groups in the province whose principal concern is wolves were never communicated with. They were never asked, and they need a lot of questions answered with regard to this. For example, tourist outfitters who provide a service in this area had no

knowledge of this coming forward. I spoke with them here this morning.

1400

Other groups have certain concerns related to training seasons. There's no mention of training seasons. What of the agricultural community? How is that going to be impacted in those specific areas? How are they going to protect livestock when dealing with these issues? I would hope, with the committee that's being established by the minister, that these specific groups and organizations will be included with this.

I know that when Lyn McLeod was the Minister of Natural Resources, she tried to move forward in areas with this. I met with the minister at that time, and she gave me assurances that the agricultural and municipal communities would be met with and dealt with, because they had strong concerns on these issues. I hear no mention of those communities being brought forward in this minister's statement at all. I certainly hope that the agricultural impact that's going to take place with this move will be dealt with, because it's going to be quite substantial.

In closing, I would like to say that no one in the province is opposed to protecting Ontario's great resources, such as Ontario's wolves. I just have concerns that the ministry is moving forward in opposition to its own specific data that say that the wolf population is extremely healthy, yet the ministry is bowing to the concerns of special interest groups in the province.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I wish to offer a suggestion to our Minister of Natural Resources. Let's accept the fact that habitats change and populations of various species change. Nature is not static. To protect an ecosystem and ecosystem processes, you must be prepared to accept that natural changes occur, obviously, within a forest and, consequently, natural changes occur with respect to wildlife species and their abundance. For example, we know the Algonquin wolf population has declined since the 1960s. Logging practices were a factor there. Both deer and beaver populations have decreased in response. Wolves are known to take down deer and to eat beaver.

Elsewhere, in the eastern Canadian wolf range, the Algonquin wolf population appears to be healthy, as Jerry Ouellette, the former minister, has mentioned. The population appears to be vigorous and expanding elsewhere. Reproductive success and recruitment are apparently not a problem. Then again, deer and beaver populations are also thriving, outside of Algonquin Park.

The Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, cites concerns that this government must be coordinated with respect to its approach to biodiversity, an issue just raised by the minister. I quote Gord Miller. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario is concerned that "while ministries may be working away at fragments of issues, they often fail to grasp the wider perspective. This failure to see the bigger picture has very practical consequences, since it can result in policies and programs that are inadequate, misdirected or even counterproductive."

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Minister, I guess I've got to stand in this House and say something nice about you for a change. I want you to know there have not been a lot of occasions that I've had the opportunity to do that. But on this particular one, I'm going to say, not a bad move. It's something that, quite frankly, has been worked on for some time by a number of people. I would say it's certainly a step in the right direction, and we give you support in where you are going.

I want to point out a couple of things that I think need to be said. Number one, there's nothing in this particular announcement, when it talks about the issue of co-management of natural resources, or I should say, as far as the forest, with our First Nations. You say in your report that wolf stocks are pretty high in most parts of the province. You will know that's not the case in all regions of the province. In dealing with Nishnawbe-Aski Nation and others, I know that they have been talking to you and with your ministry for some time about how we move to a level of co-management where First Nations are able to work together with the provincial government in setting out whatever the policies are when it comes to dealing with issues such as you announced today.

I have to say, on behalf of First Nations in northern Ontario, that we're still waiting. We're there. We signed treaties 100 years ago, and we're still waiting for the provincial government to come back and honour those treaties and engage in what was supposed to be a co-management exercise when it came to not only natural resources but all the game and wildlife within the forest.

I do want to say, however, because I know this is an issue in my riding and I would think it's an issue in many other ridings, if you have a healthy wolf population, what does it mean to the agricultural industry? We know that there used to be a program at one time that would help to compensate farmers when it came to loss of livestock. We need to make sure that if we have a healthy wolf population, which is not a bad thing, we need to have an offset on the Ministry of Agriculture side in order to assist farmers for the loss of livestock. You'll know in your riding—I used to share part of it in the Val Gagné area—we had a number of areas where we had problems in the past, and we need to make sure that if wolf stocks do come up, and I hope they do, we're able to compensate farmers adequately.

The other thing is that we need to deal with the rabies issue. You need to make sure that within your ministry you have the necessary dollars to deal with an effective rabies program, not only for wolves but for other canine animals within the forest. We've had a couple of incidents over the last couple of years where rabies has actually been quite a huge concern within the fox population, and in some cases within the wolf population, and we need to make sure that's taken care of.

I do want to say, because my friend Marilyn Churley pointed it out to me, that you chose today not to talk about the woodland caribou.

Ms Churley: Woodland caribou.

Mr Bisson: Marilyn Churley said it again, and she asked me to say to you that you promised in the last election that you were going to deal effectively with the protection of the woodland caribou. That is part of not only our platform but, quite frankly, something you said you would do, and we're still sitting here, waiting for you to do something in regard to the woodland caribou.

I want to say, on behalf of all northern communities, you are certainly a wolf in sheep's clothing when it comes to the forestry industry. You chose today not to stand up in the House and take me up on my challenge that I raised again privately with you yesterday, which is—

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Say something nice.

Mr Bisson: I did say something nice. I used the other two minutes to do something else.

When are you going to withdraw your amendments on Bill 106? You know and I know that at the end of the day there is much pressure and lots of change happening within the forestry industry. Amendments to Bill 106 that would allow forestry companies to decouple the licence of their forest operations to the mills where they ship their trees are going to result in the loss of thousands of jobs in northern Ontario.

You're a northerner. I'm a northerner. We both represent constituencies that have a large forestry industry. I know that you're an honourable member. I know that you care about the people of Kirkland Lake and Cochrane. We need to do the right thing by our constituents. Minister, I ask you in the House again today to withdraw the amendments to Bill 106 so that we can protect jobs in northern Ontario.

Minister, c'est une annonce qui n'est certainement pas dans la bonne direction. On a besoin de s'assurer que les points que j'ai faits faisant affaire avec ce qu'on fait pour les autochtones pour la réalité d'être capable—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Hey, when you guys get a chance to speak, you'll get a chance. It's my turn.

Anyway, with all that heckling, I'm done.

DEFERRED VOTES

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising / Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1408 to 1413.

The Speaker: Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Cordiano, Joseph	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Craitor, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Watson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 11.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr Speaker, I ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: So ordered.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize International Day to End Violence Against Women and the launch of the White Ribbon Campaign.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is there unanimous consent to the request by the member for Don Valley East? Agreed.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for permission of the House, perhaps unanimous consent, to show the flowers that were presented to this House this morning at a press conference by a women's organization on behalf of the days that we're honouring.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent to show the flowers? Agreed.

Hon Ms Pupatello: Thank you, Speaker, and we do appreciate the indulgence of this House, for all of the members who were at the press conference this morning that was put together by OAIH, the Ontario Association

of Interval and Transition Houses. They presented a rose for all of the women who have died this year and a pink rose for the child as well who died this year at the hands of domestic violence.

I thought it was important to show the House, because there are many thoughtful people across this province who still remember and who have dedicated their careers to making Ontario a safer place. On behalf of all the members of the House, I'm pleased to present this to the Premier so that all of us will do our part to continue the fight to eradicate domestic abuse.

I rise in the House today to mark the international community's commitment to eradicating violence against women and girls. In 1999, the United Nations declared November 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. It's observed as a day of worldwide action to raise public awareness of the problem of violence against women.

November 25 also marks the beginning of the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. This campaign links violence against women and human rights, emphasizing that such violence is a violation of human rights. The dates that the Center for Women's Global Leadership chose for the campaign symbolically make this link: November 25 is International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women and December 10 is International Human Rights Day. This 16-day period also includes Canada's national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6, the 15th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, when 14 young women were murdered at L'École Polytechnique in Montreal, a day that many of us will never forget.

Today is also the beginning of the White Ribbon Campaign, which began here in Canada in 1991 and has been so successful it's now observed in other countries around the world. This campaign, which extends to December 6, urges boys and men to speak out against male violence against women and to wear a white ribbon as a symbol of their opposition to violence against women. I believe we all have to do our part to make a difference in attitudes in our communities.

1420

I want to tell you today that a couple of hours ago I met a wonderful woman named Minou. She's a woman who came to Canada from Tehran. She is a small but powerful young woman who came to Canada with her husband—both professionals. She came as a pharmacist. When she arrived, she began to suffer from domestic abuse at the hands of her husband. To see this woman today and to hear the way she was able to talk to us about how government-supported agencies are able to reach out to people like her to get the kind of help she needed to leave an abusive relationship is a wonderful story, and one that impacts on all of us.

It motivates us to move forward and do more to work with our community partners to make a real difference in these lives, in our own women and children right here in

Ontario. I was so impressed by her and by the organization, in this case family services of Toronto, because they can make that connection for many women. Many organizations across Ontario—OAITH and the shelters it represents is but one—have reached out to women and have helped to put them and their children back on their feet.

On behalf of the McGuinty government, we applaud the people who work in this field. It is a dedicated group of people who really do make a difference in the lives of these women. We applaud the members of the House who go forward and talk and advocate and motivate all the time.

Tonight I am very pleased to find myself in Kincardine at Woman's Place in Carol Mitchell's riding, an organization that goes out every day and helps women and their children piece their lives back together when they've suffered domestic abuse.

Today we saw a number of people come together to continue to push the government to move ahead to help people who are the most vulnerable, and often those are women who have suffered domestic abuse.

I look forward over the course of the next couple of weeks to a tremendous announcement that our Premier will be involved in, which will culminate this year's work to put together our domestic violence action plan, a plan I know we're all going to be proud of that will hurtle us into the next century doing great work for women who have suffered domestic abuse.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Today in this House we are joined together to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. November 25 was proclaimed as this day by the United Nations in 1999. It commemorates the brutal assassination in 1961 of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic, on the orders of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo.

While the world and our country have made great strides in the last few decades in increasing the equality of women, we still have far to go in eliminating violence against women. November 25 is a day of commemoration but also a day of education. We must work to teach our young people that violence is wrong.

In Ontario each year too many children see or hear violence in their homes, too many see their mothers victimized by violence, too many are victimized themselves. Too many become part of a cycle of violence as boys grow up to become abusers and girls grow up to accept abuse.

We must break this cycle. Our schools, churches, community groups and agencies must teach children that violence is a crime. Children and young people must learn how to recognize the signs of an unhealthy relationship. They need to know that they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

In my riding, I would like to thank such agencies as the York Region Abuse Program and the various family life centres for the work they do in educating and assisting the victims of violence. I know they are rep-

resentative of the work done by similar agencies across the province.

Thanks must also go to all the organizations that perform valuable research in anti-violence strategies. I am also grateful to agencies such as the Ontario SPCA, which has demonstrated that cruelty to animals is often a red flag indicating violence against women and children. We must continue to support women and their families who are victims of violence.

I am very proud of the actions that our government took while in office to fight violence. We provided 54 courts by 2004, enhanced prosecution of abusers by crown attorneys specially trained in domestic violence issues, support for victims, and specialized processing of these cases. We increased shelter funding by \$26 million over four years to add 300 new shelter beds and to refurbish 136 others. Nine million dollars annually was provided in new funding for counselling, telephone crisis service and other shelter supports. We developed a province-wide, toll-free, bilingual support line that offered referrals to victim services, information about the criminal justice system and information about the status and scheduled release of offenders. I'm very proud of this record and I know that I speak for all of our caucus in saying that we will fully support any measures this government takes to enhance the fight against violence against women.

I wanted to end my statement with some words of hope, but after reading the newspaper this morning, I cannot do so. A man in Toronto who lured an 11-year-old girl over the Internet to his apartment and sexually assaulted her has been sentenced to only the 21 months he has already served. The crown attorney asked that he be sentenced to 10 or 12 years. Even worse, this man had been ordered deported four years ago and shouldn't even have been in Canada. Fighting violence against women takes education, prevention and assistance to victims. It also requires that violence against women is recognized as a crime, that perpetrators are criminals and should face stiff sentences for their crimes.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I rise on behalf of New Democrats today to talk about this issue before us. In 1998, Ontario signed a federal-provincial-territorial agreement that stated, "Living free of violence is a right, not a privilege." We all know that some women in Ontario and many women across the world are denied that right in their homes every day. After a series of high-profile coroners' inquests and reports, time after time domestic assault and homicide are still too commonplace, and in Ontario that risk continues to be prevalent.

Last week, I was privileged to be invited to speak at a press conference with Wyann Ruso, who came all too close to being the next "femicide" victim in Ontario. She's still in a lot of pain and recovering from her severe injuries, but she decided to speak publicly about her ordeal in hopes that it would be a catalyst for real change. I think we all want to acknowledge and thank Ms Ruso for her courage and strength in coming forward and

telling her story. We wish her a speedy recovery and wish her well.

I'm not going to go into the details of that case today. I think we all are aware of what happened to Ms Ruso. But the success of the domestic violence strategy that was mentioned today in the press conference I attended with the minister will be measured in part if this number declines, and indeed we have to see this number decline. I have not been at many press conferences where I've seen most of the members of the media, both male and female, either in tears or close to tears themselves because we had the faces of victims representing victims of domestic violence in front of us. It was a very painful thing to behold. I think it should serve to remind all of us why we're here today talking about this issue and why it is urgent to take further action.

Of course, what needs to be reformed has been well-documented already by the many reports prepared by the coroner's office after spousal homicide attacks take place, and by researchers and women's advocacy groups.

1430

I would say that Ontario women don't need another paper plan. They do not need a plan that may languish on paper because the dedicated funds never really flow to it. There is a plan in place and it just needs to be implemented. These women and their children need places to turn to, to rebuild their lives in safety. But if there is nowhere to go, as was the case with Gillian Hadley—we don't know for sure but she may have been alive today had there been housing for her to go to—and if help is scarce, women are forced to choose between poverty and violence.

The ministerial steering committee struck to devise the government's action plan does not include at the table the front-line groups that are most knowledgeable about what is needed and what does and does not work. I know the minister was there today and heard as well as I did OAITH and others at the press conference ask Queen's Park, the government, to rectify that situation and make sure these women are at the table while this plan is being devised.

Women need to have in place a viable network of safe places for them and their children to go. That has been an urgent recommendation continuously articulated over the years by the coroner's office—after deaths—through the May-Iles inquiry, its tragic successor the Hadley inquiry, and the recent report by the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee.

There is an acute shortage of safe places for women to go. Women's shelters are filled to capacity, and then the second-stage housing and affordable housing women need are in short supply because of cuts made both by the Liberals in Ottawa and the Tories here. We now have to rectify that situation, because as a result, as I said, women have terrible choices to make.

I would say in closing that we talked a lot yesterday about housing. Today we will be talking about child care and some of those other issues that are absolutely critical

to have in place in this province for women who are trying to flee from violence, in order to keep them safe.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO GENERATION CONTRACT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, yesterday you said, and I'm quoting, "There will be a lot of excitement about the prospect that we're increasing Canada's wind supply." We know of one person who is quite excited today, excited to the tune of \$475 million. That's the value of the contract you handed to Erie Shores Wind Farm, which is owned by AIM PowerGen, a private energy firm. The president of AIM PowerGen is one Mike Crawley, former top assistant to Liberal leader Lyn McLeod and current Ontario president for the Liberal Party of Canada. Minister, do you stand by your decision to give a top Liberal a \$475-million contract?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The winning bid is actually from Erie Shores Wind Farm limited partnership, of which Mr Crawley's firm is one partner. The other partner is somebody named Stephen Probyn, president of Clean Power Income Fund, who ran for the Conservative Party in the 1997 federal election. You may want to add that to your list of partners in that project.

Mr Crawley also indicated that he had the opportunity to meet with Mr O'Toole last week with respect to their proposal, and Mr O'Toole wished his company luck because it was such a good proposal. The final piece that I think members should know is that your House leader, Mr Baird, is scheduled to meet with Mr Crawley next week, and your party appointed Mr Crawley to the energy supply and conservation task force.

Mr Runciman: It just shows you how non-partisan we can be. In the announcement yesterday, you handed the folks at AIM PowerGen an incredibly lucrative contract, made even more lucrative by the fact that you fixed a price for the energy they'll hopefully produce at eight cents per kilowatt hour, roughly 60% higher than the fixed price consumers will now pay.

This is a deliberately inflated price. The trouble is, it's not for one year or five years; it's for 20 years. In AIM PowerGen's case, that's worth \$475 million in return for a modest 99 megawatts of power, a mere drop in the bucket, given that Ontario can now produce 30,000 megawatts.

Your Liberal friends are now cashing in on a decision you made to the tune of a big red-ribbon-wrapped \$475 million. How do you justify this extraordinary cost to a senior Liberal for a relatively small amount of power?

Hon Mr Duncan: I'll remind you again that one of the partners in this venture is Steve Probyn, who was a federal Conservative candidate in 1997.

The eight-cent price is consistent with the price arrived at for renewables in Quebec and Manitoba. Eight cents is not the flat price. There's a range of prices between 7.1 cents and eight cents. The average turned out to be eight cents because of this. The price, at eight cents, came in below what most analysts expected it would be for renewables. The original estimates were between eight cents and 12 cents.

Finally, this government set up a process that was independent of myself, of the government, of even my senior officials. There was a fairness commissioner hired from the outside, and the fairness commissioner signed off on the process that yielded a contract of this nature that went to a partnership headed by a prominent federal Conservative candidate, Steve Probyn.

Mr Runciman: The reality is that we are talking about the principal of this company, who is a senior Liberal operative, one who is highly involved in both the provincial and federal Liberal parties. He has just been handed a contract worth close to half a billion dollars for a 0.3% contribution to power output. Can the minister guarantee that neither Mike Crawley nor AIM PowerGen had any undue influence over this process? Can you guarantee that?

Hon Mr Duncan: The fairness commissioner has already guaranteed that, and the way the process was set up it was guaranteed. I'd remind the member that a prominent Conservative is a partner in that as well. What I can guarantee you is that there will be no more total contracts of \$9 million to backroom players like Paul Rhodes, Tom Long, Leslie Noble, Michael Gourley or Jaime Watt. Those days are gone.

The other thing I'll say to the member opposite is that this government is proud to be the first to bring on meaningful renewable energy in this province: 395 megawatts at a competitive price. To impugn the integrity of a defeated Conservative candidate, who is a partner in one of the successful bids, is really doing a disservice to Mr Probyn, whose company competed fairly in a process that was assessed to be fair by an independent arbiter. They may not want us to, but we believe in cleaner, greener power for this province and indeed for this country.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Runciman: I agree that this is not \$9 million in backrooms; this is \$24 million a year for 20 years to a Liberal crony.

Can the minister explain how it was that Mike Crawley led a policy session of your Liberal Party policy conference just three weeks ago? The subject was renewable energy. We have a copy of the program, the Ontario Liberal Party annual policy development conference in November. Mike Crawley, now recipient of this half-billion-dollar Liberal government contract, was presenting a closed-door session on renewable energy. Only registered Liberals could listen to this one. Minister, \$475 million is a very sweet payback for speaking at a Liberal conference, wouldn't you agree?

Hon Mr Duncan: Mr Crawley is the president of the Canadian Wind Energy Association. Jim Miller, the head

of PC research, attended and paid his registration to attend the conference. Mr Crawley was appointed by the member's government to sit on the task force on energy supply and conservation because he is an expert.

The work that has been done in the renewable energy file to increase Canada's wind capacity by more than 80%—Canada's wind capacity—is only the first step. We will work with anyone, whether they're a New Democrat, a Conservative, as Mr Probyn is, one of the partners in that deal—a defeated Conservative candidate—or a Liberal, if they have expertise and participate in an independent and fair process, which we established, which we set up and which was signed off on by the fairness commissioner.

I was delighted that the director of Conservative research was able to attend our conference, and I should tell you there were members of other political parties there, at what was a fulsome discussion about the importance of renewable energy to the future of this province and country.

1440

Mr Runciman: The minister has a dramatically different view of the world, now that he's sitting in the government benches, versus what positions he took on this side of the House. The facts are that Mike Crawley is a former top assistant to former Liberal leader Lyn McLeod. He is the current Ontario president of the Liberal Party of Canada. He's an influential Liberal insider, and that's made clear by the fact that he was featured in this session on the need for renewable energy at your own policy conference. Now he's the recipient of a \$24-million-a-year contract for 20 years, and that's a contract for a modest amount of renewable energy.

Minister, I think people deserve a better answer than they're receiving from you here today. Please explain the situation, which on the surface seems to be very difficult for you to deal with.

Hon Mr Duncan: Over 41 bids were received on the RFP. It was set up with an independent outside consultant that was approved some time ago. This partnership, involving Mr Probyn and Mr Crawley, was one of the successful proponents. It was tendered, and it was subject to an independent arbiter for fairness.

I can tell you what wasn't tendered. Paul Rhodes's \$335,000 strategic communications advice to Ontario Hydro was untendered; his \$211,000 strategic advice to LCBO was untendered; \$683,000 in contracts to Tom Long to Hydro One; \$635,000 to Tom Long's company, Egon Zehnder, untendered; an untendered contract for \$195,000 to provide insight and leadership techniques to the Darlington nuclear plant.

The process was fair and independent. It yielded up a bid for 99 megawatts by a company that's partnered by a Liberal and a Conservative. Regardless of political stripe, we welcome their participation in helping Ontario move to a cleaner and greener energy program.

Mr Runciman: That's the standardized response. I didn't hear millions of dollars or billions of dollars talked about in that response, and that's the reality of this con-

tract: \$24 million-plus a year for 20 years, close to half a billion dollars over that term, to a Liberal insider. It has a strong stench of unethical behaviour, especially considering it's for a 0.3% increase in Ontario's power supply.

Given what we believe is an obvious conflict of interest, will you immediately put this contract on hold, pending a review by Ontario's Integrity Commissioner? If you have nothing to hide, let the independent Integrity Commissioner look at this \$475-million deal. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Duncan: No. The fairness has been determined independently. There is a process under the act that the member opposite can submit.

I want to point out again that this process yielded up a number of superb projects, and that will produce energy for 20 years into the future. By the way, one of the interesting things we discovered—and I know members on all sides the House will be interested in this—is that wind power is now becoming competitive with natural gas. That means we can turn more to wind and more to renewables.

So for 20 years at that price, yes; but over time, as fossil fuel prices rise, the price of wind stays the same. As long as the wind continues to blow, we believe we should harvest it. We believe it's in the interests of this province to have cleaner, greener power. I welcome Steve Probyn's involvement in this partnership, and we're thankful that there are people out there—smart, intelligent, creative people—bringing their goodwill, their expertise and their investment dollars to bring on cleaner, greener energy in Ontario.

The Speaker: New question. The leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): This question is for the Acting Premier. Just a few months ago, on June 24, the energy minister stood in the Legislature and boasted that 90 companies had come forward and expressed interest in generating renewable electricity in Ontario and that the total of the offers was 4,400 megawatts. In other words, there were a lot of companies that came forward, a lot of operators came forward offering to generate renewable power. Can you explain how it is that the president of the Liberal Party of Canada, Ontario wing, gets a guaranteed 20-year deal to sell electricity to the hydro system at prices 60% higher than the current wholesale price?

The McGuinty government is giving the president of the Liberal Party a rich private hydro contract. I say that's cronyism. I say it's conflict of interest. Will you immediately terminate this rich contract for your Liberal friend?

Hon Mr Duncan: First of all, if the member opposite had read further on what I said that day, that 4,400 megawatts was just the first cut. When we analyzed them, we discovered, for instance, that there were proposals for nuclear reactors in there. Surely the member opposite didn't want us to endorse nuclear reactors. That's number one.

Number two, the member incorrectly stated that this was awarded by the Liberal Party. The member will recall that this government—and he criticized us for doing this—hired outside consultants to take us through the process, including a fairness commissioner who analyzed every aspect of the deal and signed off on it.

The members of the government became aware of the actual successful proponents, I believe, about three days ago. We weren't involved in any aspect of the selection. There was a fair process established. There were indeed hundreds of applicants. We went through a rigorous process where we winnowed them down to the best proposals at the best price. This particular partnership was one of 10 successful bidders. We welcome the addition of new renewable energy to this province.

Mr Hampton: The minister is already changing his story. On June 24 he boasted, "We've received expressions of interest" that would total "approximately 4,400 megawatts of ... renewable supply" including "wind, solar, water, biomass and landfill gas." It seems to me there were a lot of offers in there.

I want to just talk about Mr Crawley's expertise. Just go to the Liberal Web site. There's Paul Martin. There's Mr Crawley. Here's his expertise: Mike Crawley, president. Mike Crawley has extensive party experience. He has served the party in a number of capacities, including on riding executives, campaign teams, young Liberal executives and staff positions with federal MPs, the party office and the office of the Leader of the Opposition in Ontario.

This guy is a Liberal hack. He's a Liberal hack, and you're handing him a \$475-million contract. Where I come from, we call this wrong. Where I come from, we call this cronyism. Where I come from, we call this conflict of interest.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Hampton: Will you terminate the contract?

Hon Mr Duncan: What the member failed to indicate was that Mr Crawley is also the president of the Canadian Wind Energy Association. Mr Crawley was also appointed by the Conservative government to sit on the energy supply and conservation task force.

The member failed to mention that this government set up an independent process, away from government, that involved outside consultants who made the decisions based on a number of criteria, including the quality of the proposal and the price of the energy. This proposal was one of 10 successful proponents. I'd remind the member opposite that the other company that's partnered in this is headed by a member of another political party. There was no political involvement in this process whatsoever.

We believe this is a good project going forward into the future of this province. It does so in a competitive way and makes sure that instead of doing what previous governments did on the renewable file, and that is nothing, we have new clean, green energy going forward into the future.

Mr Hampton: I even go to his own CV, and he says he's held senior management positions in the public and

private sectors. He's held a number of sales management positions with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. This guy had no involvement with wind energy until the Conservative government appointed him to a task force, and you have continued to put him in positions like that since becoming government.

Here is what really stinks: He goes to the Liberal policy conference three weeks ago and tells you what your hydro policy should be, and then three weeks later, he gets a \$475-million contract. Where I come from, this stinks. This stinks. Will you do the responsible thing and will you terminate this blatant conflict of interest, this blatant payoff to your Liberal friend?

1450

Hon Mr Duncan: The only thing that stinks is the mischaracterization that member has made of a successful proponent that involved a number of successful companies in this province trying to help us bring on more clean, green power.

Again, I emphasize, last winter this government set up an independent process, with outside consultants, overseen by a fairness commissioner. The bids were not known to the government. The government had no involvement in the selection of the successful bidders. We've announced 10 successful proponents who will bring on 395 megawatts of power that is clean and green into this province, at a price that is comparable to similar power in other jurisdictions and that over time will prove to be a very good deal when one factors in all the aspects associated with having cleaner, greener electricity in Ontario.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: To the Minister of Energy, you might remember this: Dalton McGuinty promised change. He said, "Choose change." He said that he would put the public good ahead of private interests and political cronies. Where is the change?

Well, Leslie Noble is gone, Michael Gourley is gone, Paul Rhodes is gone. But now we have Michael Crawley at the trough, the president of the Liberal Party at the trough, to the tune of \$475 million.

Someone said, it's "sickening." "The people of Ontario can be assured that this kind of nonsense is not going to happen again." Do you know who that was? That was Dwight Duncan who said that. Dwight Duncan. Why is Conservative cronyism sickening but \$475 million of McGuinty cronyism for the president of the Liberal Party is OK?

Hon Mr Duncan: What was sickening and remains so is that all that was done untendered. There was no freedom of information applied to Hydro or OPG.

There has been change. Five years of NDP government: In five years, how much wind power did they bring on? Six tenths of one megawatt of wind power in five years. This government has brought on 355 megawatts. So there has been a big change. Under the Conservative government, eight years in power, 14 megawatts of wind energy. This government announced yesterday 355

megawatts of wind and another 40 megawatts of other renewable sources.

There was an independent process that was publicly tendered—he may have wanted to go to the Web site to follow the progress of that—with an outside fairness commissioner overseeing every aspect of it. So there has been real change on renewable energy, real change in how we do business. This is a good deal for the people of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: I want to quote Dwight Duncan again: "The people of Ontario voted for change—real change. We're giving them real change in the energy sector.... one thing I know for certain: There will be no more abuse of the public trough by Tories, like went on under that government for almost eight pitiful years."

Instead, we have the president of the Liberal Party of Canada, Ontario wing, and even his own CV says that he was in sales management for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and before that he was a political hack. You are going to give him a \$475-million contract at 60% higher than the current price of electricity. Meanwhile, for low- and modest-income families, who have been hit by an over-20% increase in their hydro prices, you are only going to give them a dollar for every extra \$20 that you take out of their pockets. Maybe you can tell me, is this the McGuinty government's definition of "change"—you whack ordinary Ontarians with double-digit hydro price increases and you give the president of the Liberal Party a guaranteed \$475-million contract?

Hon Mr Duncan: Publicly advertised requests for proposal that were advertised in every major daily in the province, that have been subject to oversight by independent outsiders, is hardly a backroom deal.

We have brought about change. We did everything in a fair and open process that was there for everyone to see. You impugn the integrity not just of Mr Crawley but of a number of partners in that organization who are taking the risk of building this, who are providing us—and I know the member is opposed to renewable energy, I know that he doesn't want to move forward, but I would suggest that this process was fair, it was open, it was subject to public scrutiny and it is subject to freedom of information. That's what has changed. That is altogether different from what went on here before we became the government last year.

Mr Hampton: Do you know what? Ninety companies came forward, and somehow the president of the Liberal Party, who has virtually no experience in this field, comes out on top.

According to the McGuinty government, you could have a bank robbery and you could have the bank robber walking off with the money and as long as you had an independent consultant who said, "It's all fair," that would be fine with the McGuinty government.

Here is what is happening out there. It's a very cold day today; in many places, it's snowing. Across Ontario people who have to use electric heat are using a lot of electricity. They are being whacked with double-digit hydro rate increases. Many of them can barely afford it,

yet the McGuinty government definition of "change" is that those people should be whacked; they should have money taken out of their pockets so that the president of the Liberal Party can walk away with a \$475-million guaranteed contract. I ask you again, is this the McGuinty government—

The Speaker: Minister of Energy.

Hon Mr Duncan: There is no doubt that the question of low-income consumers of electricity is a significant issue. To link these two issues is absolutely phony. This process was open, fair, accountable, subject to FOI and it yielded 10 proponents, of which this partnership was one of the successful proponents. It represents a dramatic change in how government does business. We are moving forward to bring on these 395 megawatts of power, using a process that was fair, open, transparent and subject to enormous scrutiny. We're satisfied that this process has yielded the best, most favourable results for the people of Ontario.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. He seems not to be here.

Interjection.

Mr Klees: While the minister takes his seat—Minister, today our clippings were full of articles that talked about school daycares being planned. Theresa Boyle of the Toronto Star, Margaret Philp in the Globe and others reported on announcements that would be made today that there would be child care implemented throughout schools in Ontario. Interestingly enough, you were not at the announcement, and even more interestingly, the announcement never did happen.

Is it true, Minister, that you heard from directors of education from across this province and from school board trustees that such an announcement is absolutely impractical, impossible to implement? Is that why that announcement was withdrawn today?

1500

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I think the member opposite is somewhat confused. There was an announcement today about a terrific program for young children, one that should have happened—ought to have happened—under the previous government. In fact, it reflected a report they commissioned from Dr Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain a number of years ago—five years ago—that said what they should do. This government is doing it. Unfortunately, the kids in this province have been made to wait.

What was in the announcement—I can't speak to any speculation ahead of it—was a very substantial connection with the work we're already doing in schools.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm not quite sure if the Minister of Community and Social Services is answering the question or you are answering the question. Could you just wrap up in 10 seconds?

Hon Mr Kennedy: To wrap up, I'm surprised the member opposite is not applauding the tremendous announcement made by the Premier and by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, but he should. And he should understand that it will complement very well what we're doing in our schools: improving education for young children.

Mr Klees: Neither of the ministers answered the question. The reality is that they made an announcement, or at least sucked the media in, letting them think they were making an announcement about child care facilities in schools, which would have been wrong in the first place.

I'm glad they withdrew. I'm glad that school board trustees and directors of education got to them. Here is what the director of education for York region appealed to the minister to do: Put in place in York region a centre for child care that deals with serious issues; that is, child care centres that deal with special needs for children. He says that 14,000 children with disabilities living in York region are without the support of a children's treatment centre.

This minister has his priorities all wrong. What I want to know from the minister is, will he get the priorities right and encourage the minister responsible for children's services to put in place children's treatment centres where they are needed, rather than play games with child care centres that are not needed?

Hon Mr Kennedy: I think what parents of this province, and probably even educators and principals and others, would have liked from the member opposite was his saying something in favour of strengthening public education in this province, instead of some idle speculation about what might have been better in terms of a child care announcement.

What's very good about this announcement is that it has been endorsed by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, by representatives from the Atkinson centre and by Margaret McCain, who wrote the Early Years report that your government let sit on the shelf and collect dust for month after month while children grew up without the advantages they're finally going to have. That's what happened.

I want to speak, if I can, in my capacity as Minister of Education, to the critic for education. The education community welcomes this announcement today. They welcome the wraparound. I say to parents out there, in case you're wondering how the critic opposite entirely missed your concerns that this is—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm going to ask for a late show, because this minister did not answer my question relating to the children's treatment centre that is identified—

The Speaker: I understand. Thank you. As you know, you must put forward the necessary papers for the late show.

New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Acting Premier. I am shocked at your government's conduct today. You raised hopes again and again and then dashed them by failing to come through with any real action. You hype and put out all these brave and bold new plans, and then you don't deliver. All you deliver are re-announcements and pilot projects. You did it with housing, you did it with health care and now you're doing it with child care.

You said your Best Start program would help 330,000 children under six, but today's announcement doesn't even come close. You announced a three-community pilot project, and that's it. This is not a best start; this is hardly a baby step. Acting Premier, when will you stop dashing people's hopes and start delivering on your promises?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The program does deliver on people's hopes, and the public should listen to this. This is a comprehensive plan. There is substantial money for helping young babies deal with health problems. There's substantial money for helping young babies deal with hearing and other disabilities. There is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Nickel Belt, will you come to order, please. Acting Premier?

Hon Gerry Phillips: There's a plan for full-day learning for young people, and I think the public should understand. Here's what independent people who know this issue say: "This is the best thing that has happened since McCain and Mustard issued their Ontario Early Years Study, 1999. Finally, the key recommendations of their report are on the road to being implemented." That's a professor from OISE.

This is what Margaret McCain said: "This program"—

The Speaker: Maybe you can give that in a supplementary, Acting Premier. Supplementary?

Ms Horwath: In fact, I think Dr Mustard comes from a university in the community I'm from, and I know his work very well. But if this were a major commitment, we'd see the minister here. It would be announced right here in this Legislature along with all the other government business. But instead, you took your announcement out of this building, where it wouldn't get the scrutiny that it deserves.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services has said over and over, of course—and it's true—that the early years are important. They're definitely the most important. Aren't those early years crucial enough to warrant more than just a study that's gaining dust on a shelf, a tiny pilot project in just three communities in this province?

Where's the beef, Acting Premier? Where's the beef? When is your government going to come through with the provincial dollars, the \$300 million that you promised? When is that genuine province-wide program

going to be coming forward for the children of all of Ontario?

Hon Gerry Phillips: Again, I say to the public, the plan is there. And here's what experts say about it—not the opposition, which may look for any particular little problem. Here's what the experts say: "At last we have a government that understands that how children start out has a huge impact on where they end up." That's the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. "This government's plan is critical to Ontario's moving ahead as a province." That's a child psychologist from McMaster.

Again, I quote the author of a major report, Margaret McCain: "This program is a fulfillment of everything we envisioned in 1998 with our Early Years Study. This was our vision and hope for Ontario, and indeed Canada."

So I think the public understands when people who understand this issue, experts who have studied it, have looked at our Best Start plan. Those are their comments, not the opposition's, dare I say, ranting against a plan that I think will do an enormous amount of good for our young people.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm just waiting for some members to settle.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member from Trinity-Spadina seems not to have settled yet.

New question.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr David Orazietti (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, there's no doubt that we're facing serious challenges in the energy sector and have been for years because of a lack of planning on the part of the past two governments. I'm pleased we're moving forward in the energy sector and on several reform initiatives that are proposed in Bill 100.

Constituents in my riding have been following the challenges we face and have been advocating for more clean, renewable power. Yesterday it was exciting to learn that Great Lakes Power, Superior Wind Energy and Harmony Wind Energy put forward a successful proposal for a 100-megawatt wind park near Sault Ste Marie. Minister, what are some of the environmental and economic benefits of these new clean power projects?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The outcome of our RFP for renewable energy has yielded 395 megawatts of renewable power. We believe it's great news for the people of Ontario. Communities like Sault Ste Marie, which are in close proximity to this, will benefit directly.

Again, this announcement yesterday represents an 80% increase in the amount of wind power available in Canada. I should also say that there will be more opportunities in the future to bring on still more wind and other forms of renewable electricity, to help us deal with the supply crunch we have. We believe that these projects, when fully implemented and running by the end of 2007,

will make an important difference in how we provide energy to our homes, businesses and schools, and we're excited by the prospects of their success.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary? The member from Guelph-Wellington.

1510

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Minister, my constituents are excited about this announcement because, as you say, it will help clean up our air and benefit our economy.

My constituents in Guelph-Wellington are particularly excited because one of the successful low bidders is Guelph Hydro, which is owned by the citizens of Guelph. In fact, the Eastview landfill was recently closed, and we will be collecting the methane gas from the landfill and using it to generate electricity—a very exciting project. We certainly need this diverse supply mix: wind, solar, biomass, landfill gas. I'm pleased to see that we've done that.

Minister, when might consumers see the first power as a result of this announcement and, since this RFP you issued last June was so successful, will the government be bringing on further supply from renewable energy?

Hon Mr Duncan: I thank the member for the question. All projects have to be producing power by December 31, 2007. We believe that a number of them will actually be up and running by 2006. I also want to note that the successful proponents were, in fact, the lowest-cost producers of this electricity, as judged by the process we had established.

The public RFP that we launched earlier this year was the first of many future opportunities for Ontario's renewable generators, both large and small. One area we're looking forward to expanding on is the so-called really small projects—the single windmills that are more prevalent in Europe—where we still haven't made enough progress.

All these projects have to be on line before December 31, 2007; otherwise, there are financial penalties to the successful proponents. Some will be on as early as 2006, and we're looking forward to more opportunities for development of renewable power as we move forward into the future.

HIGHWAY 60

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. I've raised this issue with you on a number of occasions by way of statement, by way of direct contact, by way of letter, and we're raising it by way of question in the House today. It's the issue of Highway 60 in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

The condition of this highway continues to deteriorate, yet I have no answer from you. Will you make a commitment today to this House and to the people of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke that the two most critical sections of that highway—between Eganville and Douglas and between Barry's Bay and the Nipissing boundary—will

be reconstructed next year, 2005? Minister, will you make that commitment today? Lives are depending on it; the condition of this highway is getting worse.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): We are always very concerned about the condition of the highways, and we want to make sure that we have adequate support for our drivers and the people of Ontario. So I am prepared, and have instructed my staff, to go and look at those highways. We will make sure that whatever needs to be done gets done.

Mr Yakabuski: I offered to even drive you around there myself, but we don't want you looking at it any longer, because your press secretary, in an interview with the Barry's Bay This Week newspaper, committed that those two stretches of highway would, in fact, be reconstructed next year, in 2005.

Does your press secretary speak for you, and will you back up that press secretary now and commit to reconstructing those two sections next year?

Hon Mr Takhar: Let me answer the first part. He offered to have me go with him; there's no question about that. I said to the member that if he authorized me to check his driving licence record, then I would be more than pleased to do it. But he never agreed to do that, so I couldn't do it.

I have suggested that I ask my officials to go and look at the highways, and then we'll see what condition they are in and what action is to be taken.

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. Minister, I have a copy of a letter written to you by the Second Stage Housing Alliance. They want you to keep the promise the Premier made prior to the election on reinstating funds to second-stage housing.

I'm quoting from the letter now: "It is a great disappointment to have been promised reinstatement of core program funding for so long from this government, only to hear that new programs will be developed with the money previously promised."

Minister, they're saying that because of your decision, programs are on the verge of closure. That's just like under the Tories—something you railed against when you were in opposition. Will you keep your promise and reinstate funding for all 27 existing second-stage housing programs, as promised?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to receive this type of question, considering that today is the day we're marking an international day for eradicating violence against women. It's important to note that several weeks ago we made a tremendous announcement. We brought second-stage housing agencies back into the fold of the provincial government. We announced a \$3.5-million support to our agencies in the women's sector that work with transitional housing supports. We've not just gone back to

some of our second-stage housing providers, but we've also enhanced the current program, which is funding transitional support workers to help women who are in-community, because we recognize that 80% of women who face abuse don't, in fact, go through shelters or second-stage. We realize that we have to help as many women as possible, and I know that this member from Danforth supports the efforts that we've made to reach out to women who've suffered domestic abuse.

Ms Churley: Minister, you can put all the spin you want on this. The reality is that your government, in opposition and after winning government, said that you were going to reinstate all of the core funding to existing second-stage programs. You didn't do that. You have used that money, that \$3.5 million, to create new programs. You're pitting people against each other in the sector. You promised the second-stage housing money, and you did not deliver. You said in the past that you believed it was critical, and you know that, without such housing programs, many women are left to choose between poverty, homelessness or returning to the abusive home they tried to leave in the first place.

Nobody's objecting to your new transitional programs that you brought in, Minister; they're important. But you have not kept your promise. You are not putting the funding back into those existing programs. It's badly needed. Will you stand on your feet today and say that you will keep the promise you made—and they believed you—on second-stage housing in this province?

Hon Ms Papatello: I can tell you that the day we made our announcement to get back into the business of providing support to women who are in housing and need support was a great day for Ontario. In 1996, the previous government indeed removed funding to second-stage housing units. What has happened since then is that the women's sector agencies that work with these women who have been battered, whether they're in the shelters, whether they're in other units, whether they're in social housing—wherever they are in the community, they need our help, including in second-stage housing being provided by those agencies. What we have done is bring these agencies back into the fold.

What this member opposite knows is that within the next couple of weeks, we are laying out our domestic violence action plan, where these women's sector agencies will be stronger and they will be in a better position than ever to put these broken women back on their feet and back into their community. We are proud of that.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, I understand that yesterday the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress released its third annual report, *Realizing Our Prosperity Potential*. The report has come back with some recommendations on ways to make Ontario more prosperous, understanding that there is more work to be done to close

the prosperity gap. Minister, what steps have been taken to address these recommendations and keep Ontarians prosperous?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'd like to thank the member for the question. Let me first of all congratulate the Roger Martin task force on competitiveness and productivity for continuing their groundbreaking work. It's very important work for Ontario's economy. The good news coming out of the report is that Ontario's economy is closing the gap with its US peer states. The gap has gone from \$5,900 in 2002 down to \$3,000 in 2004—a major step forward.

1520

The good news doesn't stop there. In fact, our government is taking additional steps that will help to close the prosperity gap. We have lowered the small business income limit. We are, in addition, eliminating the capital tax. Thanks to the finance minister's budget, we're making additional investments in skills development by including an initiative with respect to an apprenticeship training tax credit, helping foreign-trained people access trades and professions, and creating an additional 7,000 apprenticeship positions.

I'd also like to quote from the task force. It stated, "Our people are highly skilled and have the attitude to win; we have an excellent mix of industries; our industries are competitive...." As well, "our governments have"

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr McNeely: One of the recommendations from this report is to ensure that we make investments into research and development and innovation. I know you've been active on this issue and it is of tremendous importance to people of my riding, Ottawa-Orléans, and the city of Ottawa. Not only do we have great research at our universities—Carleton and Ottawa—but we are also home to a strong high-tech sector and many innovative, cutting-edge companies.

One of the goals of Team Ottawa-Orléans, a new socio-economic development council in my riding, is to attract these exciting companies and R&D firms to our riding.

Minister, please inform this House of your effort to make research and innovation a priority in Ontario.

Hon Mr Cordiano: I'm happy to report that research and innovation are at the top of this government's priority list. I'm proud of the fact that we've made a four-year commitment to research and we are actually going to be investing \$1.8 million over the next four years toward research and commercialization.

The good news is that we're also revamping Ontario's research programming. We're creating a new Ontario research fund, which will do three things: It'll make us more accountable and transparent, make certain that there is a made-in-Ontario set of policies toward research and commercialization, and place a greater emphasis on commercialization as well.

In addition to this, we have a commercialization strategy which will take good ideas out of our labs and ensure that they get to the marketplace with some degree of success. This McGuinty government wants to make sure we are creating high-paying, high-value-added jobs, creating more prosperity for all of Ontario. That's what this government is doing.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Minister of Energy earlier today referred to the fairness commissioner. We've discovered that the commissioner is a significant donor to the Liberal Party of Ontario. So much for fairness.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

GAMBLING

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister or Economic Development and Trade, the minister responsible for gaming.

It has long been my view that too many Ontario families have been negatively impacted by gambling addictions. This problem has been highlighted in a great number of media reports in recent weeks, including a continuing investigative series by Dave Seglins of CBC Radio. Much of the initial coverage focused on a report conducted by the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre. That report estimated that Ontario residents lose more than \$4 billion a year on provincially run gambling. The alarming fact is that 35% of that massive sum is coming from the 5% of Ontario's adult population who have a gambling problem.

Almost six months ago I introduced Bill 95, which would prevent the government from establishing any new gaming premises, or expanding any existing ones, until it appoints a commission under the Public Inquiries Act to study the negative social impacts of excessive gambling. My question to the minister is very simple: Will the government express support for my bill?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): With respect to the whole question of gaming and what we're going to do, I've made certain that we're going to take stock of where we are in this province. We are conducting a major assessment of the gaming industry in this province. It has seen a rapid increase in its size over the past 10 years, since the day that the NDP government of Bob Rae introduced gaming. It was further expanded by the Conservative governments under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, and we've had a tremendous increase in the expansion of this industry.

We are doing this overall, comprehensive review because it's a very important industry. It accounts for many thousands of jobs, as you know, throughout various communities in the province. As a result, we are not making any decisions with respect to expansion until this assessment is complete.

Mr Arnott: The minister outlined and gave information to the House about an operational review he has

undertaken on this issue. I'm concerned that the government is going to use this as a pretext for a massive expansion of gambling in this province. The minister is aware, certainly, that the review he has undertaken on problem gambling is being led by the former chair of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp—does this mean he is impartial when it comes to the question of gambling expansion?—and the review appears to be limited by the fact that it's being done behind closed doors without any of the public participation that Bill 95 would provide.

The Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre has outlined a five-point plan to deal with problem gambling. It includes public education for adults; effective school-based prevention for children and youth; prevention for gamblers; aggressive, innovative treatment for early-stage problem gamblers; and prevention of foreseeable harm at gambling venues such as casinos. My question is: Will the government display a social conscience and implement this five-point plan to help people with gambling addictions and take a socially responsible approach to protecting them?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I know this member cares deeply about this question, so let me say that we are taking this matter seriously with respect to problem gaming. I have asked Dr Stanley Sadinsky to review the whole problem gaming area to ensure that we are looking at best practices from other jurisdictions, and that we are in fact reaching the people who need the kind of help you're referring to with problem gaming.

There is \$36 million allocated toward problem gaming in general, and there are 47 agencies that are dealing with problem gaming, reaching out to those people who need help. I would say to the honourable member that it was your party, when you were in power, that expanded gaming throughout the province. I don't recall your ever bringing this bill forward at that time, although I do say, with all due respect, that I appreciate the sincerity with which you've brought this forward. I just want to point out that all three parties have been supportive of gaming in this province.

Mr Arnott: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to institute a three-year moratorium on the expansion of gambling—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order. New question.

EATING DISORDERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Your budget squeeze on Ontario hospitals is forcing the closure of two outpatient programs at Toronto General Hospital. These programs serve adults who are very ill, suffering from bulimia, anorexia and other eating disorders. The hospital says they have to cut educational and group therapy services currently serving 200 patients and reduce their day-patient care program, because your ministry has told them to balance the budget and these are not core services.

The hospital also says these services are available in the community, but both FADE—Family and Friends Against Disordered Eating—and Sheena's Place, a charitable organization in Toronto supporting people with eating disorders, have told us there are no publicly funded organizations in Toronto to pick up what is being cut. What are you going to do to ensure that 200 patients now receiving services and 33 people on a wait list for these services are going to get the help they need?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. I've had the opportunity to meet with the group FADE during my time as Minister of Health. I think we would all agree that the challenges for people in our province struggling with eating disorders require proper assistance from our health care system.

The circumstances the honourable member brings to the House's attention today, I'll take under advisement. I'll need to take a look at it, and work to ensure that the quality of services available to the community, given our recent \$100 million investment in community-based mental health services, meets the needs of this very particular group of Ontarians.

Ms Martel: If I might reinforce the problem, the Toronto General Hospital's eating disorders program is one of the largest and most innovative of its kind. It serves as a model for clinicians and researchers right around the world. But as a result of the budget squeeze you've placed on hospitals, they have very publicly said they are going to be cutting these services to people who suffer from bulimia and anorexia in order to balance their budget.

There are 200 people who have been currently served in the educational and group therapy sessions, there are 33 more on a waiting list and there are other patients who are going to suffer because the day-patient care program is also being reduced.

1530

I say again that both FADE and Sheena's Place have told us, as of today, there are no community-based organizations that are publicly funded that can pick up what is being lost. So I ask you again, what are you going to do to ensure that people who suffer from eating disorders are going to get the help they desperately need?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Further to the information that I provided to the honourable member in my earlier answer, I think it's important to remind members what I've had the opportunity to say many times in the House with respect to the issue of hospital funding. We've established a process with hospitals that requires them first to look at those areas that are non-clinical, that don't have patient impact, including administration and the like. We're at the earliest phases of that, and I think it's important to make sure we work through these matters with Ontario's hospitals on a case-by-case basis.

With respect to the programs the honourable member mentions, I agree that these are important programs that require support from the Ontario health care system, and

I intend to take the matter up with a view toward ensuring that Ontarians can access them.

GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, a group consisting of Ontario's vegetable, flower and pepper growers and making up the second largest agricultural industry in Ontario, is at Queen's Park today. In the ridings of Essex and Chatham-Kent Essex, greenhouse growers make a significant contribution to our economy and our rural communities. As this sector grows, so do other industries in our ridings, like trucking, packaging and warehousing. This industry is vital to the strength of our communities in my riding and across the province.

This week you made an important announcement regarding transitional assistance to farmers. Ontario agriculture is currently enduring many challenges and can use the support of the government. Minister, please tell the House and members of this important sector of agriculture how they might benefit from the support you announced Monday.

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): The announcement we made this week will allow these farmers to be eligible for the self-directed risk management program. They'll be eligible for the general top-up through the CAIS program. As well, there's been \$20 million allocated for research, and they'll be able to put applications in for those research projects.

Mr Crozier: Thank you, Minister. I'm confident that, despite any challenges the Ontario agriculture industry may face, the greenhouse industry will continue to grow and be successful and contribute to the strength of our rural communities.

The \$20 million in funding for research and development for the horticultural industry will benefit everyone in the province because of the huge impact that horticulture makes on our agriculture industry and our rural economy. We all know, however, that time is of the essence and the need for assistance is as soon as possible. Please tell the House when horticultural farmers will receive this support.

Hon Mr Peters: I thank the honourable member for the question. Farmers who are in the CAIS program and are triggering CAIS benefits for 2003 will start to receive their general top-up cheques before Christmas. As well, the self-directed risk management program is application-based, and information regarding that program will flow early in the new year.

I want to thank the member, as well, for spotlighting this important part of agriculture in the province. This is certainly one area where you can go into a grocery store and you can really help support Ontario farmers. Ontario greenhouse tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers and the flowers that come from the greenhouse industry are available to you year-round. When you're buying poinsettias for the holiday season, make sure you look to see

where that poinsettia was grown. Make sure you're buying an Ontario product.

VISITORS

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I know that you would want me to introduce two important visitors to the Ontario Legislature in the members' gallery on the east side. Sharon Gleason, who is a community activist in the city of St Catharines on the mayor's advisory committee on people with disabilities, and Regional Councillor Mike Collins are both here. I know they'd like to stand up and be recognized.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order, but they're welcome.

PETITIONS

OPTOMETRISTS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): "Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

I affix my signature to this, as I am in complete agreement.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition sent to me by people who live in Thunder Bay. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—

will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with the petitioners, and I have affixed my signature.

WEARING OF HELMETS

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas each year thousands of individuals fall while cycling, in-line skating, skateboarding or rollerblading;

"Whereas at least 20% of these cycling, in-line skating, rollerblading accidents involve an injury to the head;

"Whereas the cost of treating an individual with a severe head injury can be \$4 million to \$9 million over the course of their lifetime;

"Whereas wearing a certified helmet can prevent 85% of head injuries;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to swiftly pass Bill 129 and make it mandatory for all individuals to wear a certified helmet when cycling, in-line skating, skateboarding or using any other type of muscular-powered vehicle in the province of Ontario."

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at risk for medical conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

"Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

"Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

"Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family

practitioners and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician."

I will give it to my friend here, the page from Peterborough.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I present this petition delivered to me by Dr Dean Wright, Dr Axel Fritz, Dr Kelly Ramsay and Dr Sharon Hull. It reads as follows:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to affix my signature as well and hand these signatures over to page Curtis.

1540

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been signed by thousands of people, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas all hospitals since the inception of public medicare in Canada have been non-profit;

"Whereas 'public-private partnership' (P3) hospitals turn over democratic community control to international investors, making a public service into a commodity sold for profit;

"Whereas worldwide evidence is that private (P3) hospitals lead to doctor, nurse, staff and bed cuts in hospitals in order to make room for profit taking, consultant fees, higher borrowing costs and outrageous executive salaries;

"Whereas private (P3) hospitals hide information about the use of tax dollars by claiming 'commercial secrecy' when they privatize public institutions;

"Whereas the higher costs, user fees, two-tier services and culture of private (P3) hospitals risk the future sustainability of our public medicare system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario to stop all current and future 'public-private partnership' (P3) hospital deals and return full ownership, operation, management and delivery of hospital services to non-profit hands, and develop a plan to fund new hospitals through public finance, clearly excluding the privatization of hospital services."

I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): "To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario...

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned"—all 200—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I sign that petition.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): These petitions have been sent to me by people from Kingston and Thunder Bay. They read as follows:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with the petitioners, and I've affixed my signature to this.

TUITION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): We have a petition to increase public funding for post-secondary education, reduce tuition fees and reinstate an upfront system of grants for Ontario students. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

I'll give it to my friend, page Adam.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that I'm reading on behalf of Liz Hill on Cedar Hedge Rise in Mississauga. It pertains to a new GO train station to serve the northwest corridor. My staff have pointed out to me that I have only read the petition 19 times, so this will make it an even 20.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

I am one of those residents. I'm pleased to sign the petition and to ask Emma to carry it for me.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. They read as follows:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with the petition and have affixed my signature to this.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

It's signed by thousands, and signed by myself as well. Page Savannah is going to take this to the Clerks' table.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Oak Ridges has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education concerning children's treatment centres and boards of education. The matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

1550

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the Legislature notice of the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, November 29: Bill 149.

On Tuesday, November 30: Bill 149.

On Wednesday, December 1: Bill 17.

On Thursday, December 2: Bill 25 and Bill 73.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): What's going on?

Hon Mr Caplan: Democracy in action.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AND BUSINESS SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES AUX CONSOMMATEURS ET AUX ENTREPRISES

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr Watson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Caplan?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): It's quite all right, sir.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm going to be doing the leadoff, and it's a good thing Mr Caplan was here to move third reading of this bill. It's a good thing he was scripted, because he was tempted, I'm sure, to move it into committee of the whole—once burned, twice shy. Hopefully we won't see that any more from Mr Caplan, at least not until after some significant hiatus. The record should clearly illustrate that Minister Watson has a chance to read it, that his colleague Minister Caplan did not screw up this afternoon and, indeed, did not send the bill to committee of the whole as many of his colleagues were sitting here. They were sitting here in anticipation. I could see people mouthing over to him, "Not committee of the whole. Don't send it to committee of the whole." They were doing that; they were just trying to be helpful.

I've got a one-hour lead on Bill 70, and then Andrea Horwath from Hamilton East is going to be speaking to it. Then other New Democrats are going to be speaking to it as well, should we have the opportunity, of course; should we be able to seize the moment. I quite frankly tell you that New Democrats may have to carry the debate on this bill this afternoon. But that's OK. There are only eight of us, but the fact is that we are a formidable caucus. The eight of us can do things that 80 couldn't do in other caucuses.

The acting government House leader made reference to the matters that the Legislature may address next week. I'm looking forward to getting home, back down to Niagara Centre, tomorrow morning, which is when I'll be going because, of course, the House is sitting this evening. As a matter of fact, I'm going to be here this evening, talking to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

We're debating Bill 70 now; of course we are, Speaker. I want to let you know in advance that I always relish, I look forward to your gentle hand guiding me through these one-hour leadoffs. I want you to know, Speaker, that I value that guidance, that instruction, that mentoring, if you will, that you've been so generous with with me and with other members of the assembly. So your directing me in your oh-so-subtle way to Bill 70 is truly appreciated, because if I were not to mention Bill 70 from time to time I would be remiss.

In the context of Bill 70, I want to mention I'm getting back down to my riding, and other folks are headed to their ridings too. I'm going to be joining an SEIU, Service Employees International Union, information picket line outside the Welland County General Hospital. There are going to be similar picket lines in other communities in Niagara tomorrow. Members of the SEIU held press conferences today announcing those information pickets tomorrow. It's not the first time this month that I've been with the good women and men, members of the Service Employees International Union. I was with them back on Wednesday, November 10. I was outside Extendicare in St Catharines. That's a private, for-profit long-term-care

facility. The health professionals, members of the SEIU, who work at Extendicare in St Catharines were, in the most noble tradition of their profession of health professionals, raising their concerns about the adequacy of the care being administered to our folks and our grandfolks in long-term-care facilities—in nursing homes, as they are colloquially known.

One of the revelations during the course of that meeting of SEIU members, their supporters and friends—I was fortunate to be asked to join them—was that at Extendicare the residents who are incontinent, of course, wear incontinence supplies; if I may—I know it's offensive—adult diapers. The diapers are from a supplier that has treated them such that they turn blue when they're 60% soaked with urine. So they have to be 60% soaked with urine before they turn blue. The purpose of their turning blue of course is that staff are not allowed to change a diaper until it turns blue. That's a shocking revelation. It means that our folks who suffer incontinence as a result of their senior years are sitting in their own urine in long-term-care facilities. Feces do not affect the diaper, so if there's a bowel movement without any urine or not enough urine to constitute a 60% soaking, a resident is forced to sit in that in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

I hope members don't find any delight in that observation. I found that a shocking revelation, a disturbing one. Bill 70, to the extent that it purports to protect consumers in this province, certainly does nothing to protect our seniors—our folks and our grandfolks—in long-term-care facilities. They are forced to sit, in the instance of Extendicare, in their own bodily waste for hours at a time, and nursing staff and other care staff are forbidden to assist that particular resident of a long-term-care facility. The staff find this objectionable, odious, repugnant, but without clear direction from this government about proper standards, fair standards, just standards, humane standards in long-term-care facilities, the staff are helpless.

You see, those same seniors, even though they were promised three baths a week when the Liberals were campaigning for government, instead of the one bath a week they were allowed, promised three—promise broken. Those same residents are—oh my goodness, the largesse of this government—permitted two baths a week. The Liberals promised to restore the 2.25 hours of care per resident per day, even though that figure in and of itself is grossly inadequate, and haven't kept that promise either.

Surely we in this chamber can have sufficient concern about the welfare and the well-being of senior citizens in this province, of our folks and our grandfolks, to address this in a meaningful way and not after some lengthy consultation and review—because the facts are clear—but promptly.

1600

I was proud of SEIU members who blew the whistle on this government's inaction with respect to long-term care back on November 10, proud to be with those SEIU

members, proud to be with those health professionals who work in very demanding jobs, grossly understaffed, in long-term-care facilities, including for-profit long-term-care facilities, for extended care.

Look, the reason they have these diapers that turn blue when they're 60% soaked with urine is so that they don't have to waste money on one or two extra diapers for an incontinent adult. I know there are folks watching who are going to write me an e-mail or a letter saying that we shouldn't call these diapers, because they're adults who wear them; they're incontinence pads. There's a technical name for them that I, for the life of me, can't think of right now, so please forgive me for being so crude as to speak of them bluntly as adult diapers.

That is troubling stuff, that the government is funding long-term care just like extended care: They put profits before people.

The same SEIU members, the sisters and brothers of the ones who work in long-term-care facilities, are going to be outside hospitals in Niagara tomorrow. I'm going to be proud to join my sisters and brothers from the SEIU at the Welland County General Hospital. Let me tell you, Speaker, Bill 70 doesn't provide them much solace or comfort because, tomorrow in Niagara, Service Employees International Union workers in our hospitals, workers doing some of the most demanding and crucial and critical jobs like cleaning, keeping the hospital clean, and keeping it safe, are going to be taking this government on, this Liberal government, this Dalton McGuinty government, with its agenda of privatization of health care, an agenda that's being pursued through the contracting out of services to the private sector.

The Liberals just don't get it. Never have; seems they never will. Privatization always costs more and ends up delivering less. These health workers who are going to be outside hospitals in Niagara tomorrow know that. They're not the high-priced, high-wage workers in the health industry. They know that. They work and they work hard, and they work harder than they ever have because they're grossly understaffed in their own right. But they have a commitment, a passionate commitment, to public health care. I only wish this government, the Liberal government, the McGuinty government, shared that commitment. I wish you did.

I'm going to be with those SEIU workers outside the Welland County General Hospital tomorrow at 12 noon. I ask folks in Welland, because I know folks in Welland care dearly, just like they do in Pelham and Thorold and Port Colborne and south St Catharines—heck, all of St Catharines—to join those SEIU workers outside the Welland County General Hospital and outside other hospitals and lend their voice to those workers in their struggle because of this government's privatization of health care.

I asked one of the pages to go down to the library and pull the legislative history of Bill 70. Here we have the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations shepherding his bill through the Legislature. Thank goodness he finally shepherded it through to the end of November,

because it's only seven months after it was introduced. What is going on with you guys? You couldn't organize a one-car funeral. Seven months, and you needed the collaboration of the opposition parties to get it to this point. Good grief. It was opposition House leaders who said, "Let's get this thing wrapped up. Let's call it Thursday afternoon." My goodness.

I heard all of the tantrums of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations—indeed, the threats—the less-than-accurate depictions of Bill 70. The government tried to sell Bill 70 to me back in April. They said, "This is just a housekeeping bill." I said, "Are you sure?" They said, "It's just a housekeeping bill. There's nothing of substance in here. It's just a housekeeping bill."

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): That's it.

Mr Kormos: Khalil Ramal says, "That's it." Hansard should pick up: I said, "just a housekeeping bill," and he said, "That's it," and I responded to him. That's how you get in Hansard with a heckle, Mr Ramal. If I don't respond to you, you're squeezed out of Hansard. Even if I do respond to you and Hansard can't hear you, you're not going to be in Hansard. You've got to speak up if you're going to heckle. Speak up.

So here we've got a minister who, seven months later, whines his way to third reading. I suppose it's not inappropriate that the minister whines, because he's the author and sponsor of the bill to bring your own wine, right? What's the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations' favourite whine? "Why aren't you guys helping me pass my bill?" He doesn't understand, you see. He has a House leader who has to call the bills before they can be debated, and it's only when they're debated that they can get called for a vote. That's how it works.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Maybe they need a new House leader.

Mr Kormos: There are people over there who would do an excellent job at being House leader. I have no hesitation—I know for a fact that Ted McMeekin would be an extremely capable House leader. He could House leader the pants off the current one, make no mistake about it. Ms Marsales from Hamilton would be a wonderful—

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): Marsales.

Mr Kormos: She says her name is Marsales. That's only because she was in the real estate racket for as long as she was.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: I understand, Ms Marsales. I understand. So I just offended some real estate agents. Put a note on an e-mail tree; get it out there, please. You've been involved in the real estate business.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: OK, I understand, and that's why you wanted me to pronounce it Ms Marsales. We do more sales, right? Are you still in the real estate business?

Ms Marsales: Absolutely.

Mr Kormos: OK. What's the name of the company?

Ms Marsales: Judy Marsales Real Estate.

Mr Kormos: Judy Marsales Real Estate. Telephone number? It's 905—

Ms Marsales: No.

Mr Kormos: Nope, Ms Marsales isn't interested. Ms Marsales doesn't want your business. Ms Marsales has the opportunity. She doesn't want to—how are you going to sell houses if people don't know what your phone number is, Ms Marsales? You can't sell houses with an unlisted number, for Pete's sake.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Be careful, Bob. There was a deal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): I would just ask the member, how does this pertain to Bill 70?

Mr Kormos: I'm going to put it in context. I've got to take this puppy home, but we're going to do it the long way.

So here's the minister, the Honourable Jim Watson. He is a minister who has been very single-minded, I must say, in the course of the last short while. He's had two pieces of legislation: bring your own wine and this housekeeping bill. That's a busy minister. His parliamentary assistant, Ted McMeekin, has carried most of the load, and folks should know that. Quite frankly, if Ted were the minister, I suspect this legislation would have been developed and proceeded with far more effectively.

Watson, the minister, sponsor of Bill 70, is—well, he is who he is. He brought to mind an old Pennsylvania German word that does not have an English translation, but it captures the essence of the minister, and that is, he is an aarschgnoddle minister. He is. He's the minister of aarschgnoddle. I thought about him in the context of his cabinet. Jim Watson is the aarschgnoddle of this cabinet. In fact, he's the überaarschgnoddle. Jim Watson is the überaarschgnoddle of this Liberal caucus. I'd better get a page—I want Hansard to get the spelling right.

The Acting Speaker: I appreciate the member's comments. I would ask him to speak either French or English in his contribution to the debate this afternoon.

1610

Mr Kormos: I appreciate what you're saying, but there are, from time to time—you know the English language is a creature of neologisms and of importing words from any number of linguistic backgrounds. So let's be careful, let's be cautious about excluding any particular ethnicity from their ability to contribute to the growth of the English language. As you know, there are well-educated people who toss around, oh, the Götterdämmerung, the gestalt, and things like that, so I'm simply saying—again, I wish there were an English translation—I proclaim, I speak highly of the minister when I say to you that he is the aarschgnoddle of this cabinet, the aarschgnoddle of this caucus.

I have no qualms. If he wants to put that in a householder, then all the power to him: "Peter Kormos says that Jim Watson is the aarschgnoddle of the Liberal cabinet." Let the minister put that in his householder up in Ottawa, the Nepean area, somewhere around there, because this minister whined about Bill 70. You were

here. You heard the whining in the House, you heard the whining outside there, you heard the aarschnoddle whining of an aarschnoddle minister who seemed to have no control whatsoever over his House leader, no stature in cabinet and no ability to get his bill moved forward. He's pleading with Ms Horwath, he's pleading for her assistance, and Ms Horwath is saying, "Look, my plate's full."

Ms Horwath is the new member for Hamilton East, and a stellar member she is. I think every member of this Legislature has just revelled in her talent, commitment and incredible ability. We in the New Democratic Party are very grateful to the people of Hamilton East for sending Ms Horwath. There's no value that can be put on our gratitude. Maybe there is, but I, for the life of me, can't think of one at the moment. If there were a value to be put on it, it would be not just in the thousands of dollars, it would be in the millions of dollars—no two ways about it. We're grateful to the folks of Hamilton East.

I was down in Hamilton just last weekend for the NDP convention, a very successful convention. I read the Hamilton Spectator and saw a review of members of the Hamilton caucus, if you will: one Tory, four Liberals, and of course our Ms Andrea Horwath, one New Democrat. And the question put to them—because you see, the Hamilton Spectator has launched and is in the course of doing an incredibly effective bit of investigative reporting—incredible. I wonder, Ms Horwath, could you have somebody get me the name of the brave Hamilton Spectator reporter who was defying the court in terms of not—

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Ken Peters.

Mr Kormos: I wanted to mention Ken Peters. Ken Peters is the Hamilton Spectator reporter, and I don't know the status of the matter right now, who in the course of litigation as a witness—you know him, Mr McMeekin, I'm sure—has been called upon to name a source, at risk of being jailed. Ken Peters has, in the noblest tradition of the fourth estate, declined to do so. I don't know what the court has done with it. I think it's foolish for courts to take people like that and jail them, because you can jail them for a day, for a week, for a month, and he's still not going to inform. I mean, that's such a violation.

It's imperative that if the press, the fourth and fifth estates, are going to do the job they have to do in a democratic society, they be able to have access to information without being compelled to reveal their sources. So I, on behalf of New Democrats, want to applaud and thank Ken Peters for his journalistic integrity, for his courage, and for maintaining the incredibly high standard that members of the fourth and fifth estates in democratic countries—and in undemocratic ones, quite frankly. Let's be fair, democracy needs effective journalism and so do totalitarian regimes. Of course, the perils and dangers faced by journalists, workers in the fourth and fifth estates, in undemocratic countries are even worse. An effective press is critical to journalism.

There seemed to be a trio of reporters at the Hamilton Spectator who—have you got their bylines, Ms Hor-

wath?—with the assistance of others, have launched this investigative series into health clubs in the Hamilton area, owned, according to the Spectator, by one John Cardillo, who, we're also told, lives on some multi-million dollar estate. Customers have been getting ripped off, scammed, fleeced. The Spectator has been talking about the fleecing of these victims of the health club and, in the course of doing so, has had occasion to say to the government of Ontario and to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services—thank you, Ms Horwath. Ms Horwath is going to be speaking to this bill in short order.

Of course, Dan Nolan is one the reporters. Dan and I go back a long way. It's true. Dan was a reporter down in Welland when I was beginning my adult working life. Steve Buist, whom I spoke with on a couple of occasions, is one very impressive young journalist who I hope is taking this down now—one very impressive, young, skilled and courageous journalist. Natalie Alcoba is one of that trio. I'm sure other journalists at the Spectator have been involved. Investigative journalism of this level has become rarer and rarer and scarcer and scarcer, even with Toronto papers. You know that, don't you, Ms Alcoba? Right?

I remember Christie Blatchford, as a matter of fact, when she started working for the Globe and Mail, and she was doing front-page investigative stuff, very leading-edge stuff. I'm a fan of Christie Blatchford. I even read her when she wrote for the Post. I tried not to buy it, but I confess that when Christie was writing for the Post, I would read the Post, because I'm a fan of Christie Blatchford.

It has become harder and harder for well-trained, bright, talented journalists to engage in investigative journalism. Because you've got the ilk of rip-off scam artists like fat Conrad "Tubby" Black stealing money hand over fist from organizations like Hollinger and laying off editorial staff, because you've got crooks, criminals, like Conrad Black, who have brought journalism and news reporting and the newspaper business to its lowest level conceivable, you've seen huge erosions in the numbers of—am I wrong? If I'm wrong, shake your head. It has become tougher and tougher. The number of editorial staff on newspapers has been reduced significantly. That means that editorial writers are hard-pressed just to keep up with the day-to-day stuff, the court reports, and what's happening in the community, as compared to doing hard-hitting investigative journalism.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Say that outside.

Mr Kormos: You want me to slander Conrad Black outside? Are you kidding? I do it at every speech I can. I do it at every opportunity I can. The guy's a crook, OK? I've said it outside; I've said it inside.

Mr McMeekin: Who's a crook?

Mr Kormos: Conrad Black and Barbara Amiel—who happens to come from down my way, from my part of the province, St Catharines. Barbara Amiel is the driver of the getaway car at least, if not—she's no Patti Hearst.

She can't argue the Stockholm Syndrome. There's a lot of Gucci and Louis Vuitton that has passed through Babs Amiel's fat little fingers, paid for by the workers and the shareholders of Hollinger. That's who gets ripped off: the workers and the shareholders.

Look, Tubby Black has stolen more money from more people than any outlaw biker gang ever has. And I'm looking forward—

Interjection:

Mr Kormos: No, think about this. Who's the guy from Nortel? John Roth?

Interjection: Roth.

Mr Kormos: I'm looking forward to John Roth and Conrad Black sharing the same cell. I'm looking forward to Babs Amiel getting to know Martha Stewart on a first-name basis. If Conrad Black happens to get jailed in Canada, in a place like Millhaven—I don't know if any of you people have ever been to Millhaven. When you're shipped in, you go through the reception area, and you've got to exchange your street clothes for your prison clothes. I'm looking forward to a trusty, like some biker with a bushy beard, big biceps and piercings all over working as a trusty, and Conrad Black is up there with John Roth from Nortel right behind him and looking at the biggest, meanest, toughest biker saying, "Hey, you're my cellmate tonight, pal." I'm looking forward to that.

1620

That would be too kind to Conrad Black, to be in but Millhaven. So Conrad Black's a crook; he's a dishonest crook; he's a lying crook.

Ms Marsales: Mr Speaker, I think we need to get back to the bill.

Mr Kormos: Be careful, Ms Marsales, because I've got the first hour and then we've got seven other New Democrats to speak to the bill. We can either wrap 'er up today or we can wrap 'er up tomorrow.

Ms Marsales: Are you threatening me?

Mr Kormos: No, I'm just cautioning. Your House leader's assistant is doing what he's got to do.

So Conrad Black's a crook, Barbara Amiel, a crook, and Nortel's John Roth, another crook. Who goes to jail? Poor people end up going to jail. You want to ban pit bulls. Why don't you ban Conrad Black and Barbara Amiel? That would be a far more productive exercise. You want to euthanize a bunch of Staffordshire terrier puppies, well, take that to the next logical conclusion.

We've got Bill 70. You've got the minister, this aarschnoddle Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations—

Ms Horwath: Überaarschnoddle.

Mr Kormos: —überaarschnoddle minister—saying, "But I can't do anything about the rip-offs." He's whining. This is Mr Bring Your Own Whine: "I can't do anything about the rip-offs until I have Bill 70." Oh, for Pete's sake, what hogwash, what rubbish, what balderdash, what bunkum, what garbage. You know what I'm getting to now, don't you?

The Acting Speaker: I don't want to know.

Mr Kormos: You don't want to know, Speaker.

What foolish talk. Has the guy not read his bill? It's his staff who were trying to market this bill to me back in April saying, "Oh, Pete, don't worry about the bill; it's only housekeeping. There's nothing really substantive in there." And now we've got Watson—

Mr McMeekin: He's trying to solve the problem.

Mr Kormos: Now we've got aarschnoddle Watson saying, "But I can't do anything about these people getting ripped off." Hundreds of them, aren't there? Hundreds. Some senior citizens too, aren't there? Senior citizens who are trying to keep fit in these health clubs, right?

You've got to understand. You know that the health club industry—I remember Vic Tanny's. Do you remember Vic Tanny's? You don't, because you're too young. Do you remember Vic Tanny's? The tip-off was this: They were selling lifetime memberships for \$1,000, but then the next week, lifetime membership is \$750. They were down to \$600, \$550; lifetime memberships, \$299. People should have known, because of course the week after that, boom, Vic Tanny's is long gone, right? It's one of the problems in that industry.

Does Bill 70 have anything in it to protect people from these kind of rip-offs? Well, I read it. Ms Horwath read it. Unfortunately, aarschnoddle minister didn't, because it's the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, passed by the Conservatives back in, I suspect, 2003—passed—but never proclaimed by this government. It's got the sections in it that deal with service providers like health clubs. What is going on here? Does Minister aarschnoddle Watson not have staff to explain to him that you can go to e-laws on your Web site? Just click "e-laws," go under C, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. Oh, go to part IV—part I, part II—part IV and there are the tools that you need to get cracking on—what is it, Premier health club?

Ms Horwath: Premier Fitness.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Premier of fitness.

Mr Kormos: Premier Fitness, among others.

Does Mr Watson, the aarschnoddle minister, call upon his Premier's office or House leader—call anybody? If he had called me—look, Jim, call me. My phone number's listed. I'll tell you what you've got to do. You've got to call the secretary of cabinet or somebody in the Premier's office to proclaim the bill. Right? Don't come into the Legislature and whine while people are getting ripped off. Don't tell Ms Horwath that she's blocking Bill 70 when you haven't been able to get it called for debate. And don't try to pretend that Bill 70 has anything with your ability to protect victims of Premier Fitness rip-offs.

You know that parliamentary convention prohibits me from using language that accurately expresses what I believe Mr Watson to have been doing to the press, members of this chamber and the public.

Mr McMeekin: Give him some credit.

Mr Kormos: When people in this province elected the Liberals, they voted for change and all they've ended up getting is spare change. They've ended up with a

Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations who has little capacity to even understand the legislation coming from his own ministry, but rather who would spin—well, let me put it this way: Were the minister sitting here—and his parliamentary assistant is, so I'm not being critical of the minister for not sitting here, because it's convention that they can either have the minister here or the parliamentary assistant. I commend Ted McMeekin for carrying the ball for this minister.

But were the minister sitting here and were Diogenes to come into this room with his lamp and were Diogenes to go person by person to where the minister is, let me tell you, he'd keep on walking. Old Diogenes would keep on trucking past that minister if he happened to be in this room right now. Do you understand what I'm saying, members of the fourth estate? Remember Diogenes with the lamp? He was on a search. He was alookin' and Jim Watson wouldn't be the answer. Jim Watson wouldn't be the prize, not after the things he said about Bill 70, he wouldn't; not after the things he said about members of this Legislature, he wouldn't.

But the sad thing is, he conned—I'm sorry, that's not fair. I withdraw "conned." He persuaded his Hamilton colleagues to mouth the spin.

Again, pages, I apologize to you now, because you're too young. But these parliamentary backbenchers from Hamilton, the Liberal ones, were like Charlie McCarthy on Edgar Bergen's lap. It doesn't connect with you either, Speaker? You're not that young, Speaker; you're my age. I know it. You might even be a couple of years older. Charlie McCarthy on Edgar Bergen's lap.

You've got these four Liberal backbenchers with Edgar Bergen, aka aarschnoddle Minister Watson. They're sitting on his lap and he's in there with the hand in the back of the head and they've got to say, "Yes, Bill 70 must pass before we can protect people from rip-offs by Premier Fitness."

For Pete's sake, backbenchers, you don't get paid enough to be used that way, to be exploited that way by a minister who's too darned ineffective and lazy to get his legislation passed or to even proclaim legislation that had already been worked on by the Conservatives. Who was it, Tim Hudak, who did the Consumer Protection Act? Bill Murdoch may not be a fan of Tim Hudak, I understand that. The record is clear. Tim Hudak may not have sat down at the word processor and written that bill all by himself. I understand that even he wouldn't say that. But all you have got to do is proclaim whatever bill number it was—Consumer Protection Act, 2002.

1630

Bill 70 isn't just about the Consumer Protection Act. Bill 70 is about the Athletics Control Act—oops, nothing to do with Premier Health and Fitness Club and rip-offs of people in Hamilton. Bill 70 has to do with the Bailiffs Act—oops, nothing to do with protecting consumers from rip-offs by Premier Fitness or by Conrad Black or by Barbara Amiel or by John Roth at Nortel. Business Corporations Act—nope, oops. Business Names Act—

nope, oops. Cemeteries Act—nope, oops. Collection Agencies Act—nope, oops.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Yeah, there's a lot of oops from Mr aarschnoddle whiner Minister Watson.

Consumer Reporting Act, Corporations Act, Corporations Information Act, Land Titles Act, Licence Appeal Tribunal Act—maybe that's what the minister needed passed, the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, or maybe the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. Maybe Watson, aarschnoddle Minister Watson, needed the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act amended before he could go after people getting ripped off at health clubs. I don't know—Motor Vehicle Dealers Act?

Maybe he needed, Ms Marsales, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act amended before he could catch bad people ripping off fitness club consumers, or maybe the Paperback and Periodicals Distributors Act. Yeah, that could be. That's a maybe; that's a big maybe. I got it. Watson needs the Paperback and Periodicals Distributors Act amended before he can send investigators out to protect consumers being ripped off in Hamilton.

Maybe the Travel Industry Act—no, I don't think so. Maybe the Repair and Storage Liens Act—no, I don't think so. Maybe the Theatres Act? Could be, if he's planning on making a movie about it afterwards.

This is Bill 70. It amends all this legislation: Theatres Act, Real Estate Brokers Act, Motor Vehicle Dealers Act. It amends all these bills.

Here we are: the Consumer Protection Act. But exactly what amendments are there to the Consumer Protection Act here? Are there any amendments that substantively change the impact of the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, which hasn't been proclaimed yet? Read 'em and weep, partner; read 'em and weep: not one; none.

This whole exercise has been rather silly and pathetic, all this whining, all this moaning, all this complaining. The problem isn't with anybody else in the chamber; it's with the minister himself. Victims of fraud need protection from Premier Fitness and similar scam artists in Hamilton. Who is going to protect those health club members from Premier Fitness? Well, Lord have mercy, who is going to protect us from Minister Jim Watson?

I am hard-pressed to understand why Jim Watson says he has to have Bill 70 before he can move. You know what the problem is? I'll tell you what the problem is. Again, you're not going to like this too much. Over the course of the last eight or nine years, since 1995, the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations has been gutted. It has been. Come on, be fair. You know that as well as I do. I used to spend some time over there in years gone by. There used to be whole floors of investigators and investigative teams. There used to be real people, live people answering the phone, not cardboard cut-outs, but real people answering the phone.

If you call the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, you're lucky to get through, and if you do get through, you're lucky to get a voice mail. You sure as God made little apples ain't going to get live people

answering the phone. Try it one day. Try one of these consumer hotlines. You get a fuzzy little taped message that's rather staticky—stop buying your stuff at the bargain discount barn and dollar stores; go to Radio Shack and pick up some decent telephone answering equipment. But there are no investigators. There's nobody there to do the investigation. That's the sad thing.

So you've got a minister who is a minister in name but who is, for all intents and purposes, a court eunuch because he has no capacity, no power. He has no tools. He has the law, because he has the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, but he just doesn't have the staff; nor, it appears, does he really have the will because oh, Minister Watson, a former Conservative—you know that, don't you, Conservative members? Of course you know; you're the ones who told me. Did you say, "Good riddance," to him? He becomes a Liberal when he sees the Tory star fading and the Liberal moon rising.

Mrs Munro: It's choosing change.

Mr Kormos: He chose change; yes, that's right. I call it opportunism. What do you call it where you come from? Down where I come from we call that crass opportunism.

I expect that Bill 70, because this is what we proposed to the House leader of the government after all this whining and complaining and moaning and groaning, will go to a vote tonight at five minutes to 6, give or take. Then the minister, aarschnoddle Minister Watson, is in a pickle because he goes, "Oh, no. What do I do now?" Because now he has his Bill 70. Is the sheriff going to put on his big 10-gallon hat and hike up those cowboy boots, put the big spurs on and ride into Hamilton on his old hobby horse and start taking on John Cardillo and Premier Fitness? Do you know what? No. The whole charade is going to be exposed. The old emperor has got no clothes. The emperor is buck naked. That's the problem: no clothes. It was all gab, all yack, all spin.

The worst thing that could happen to the minister today is for this bill to get third reading—it will get third reading unless something extraordinary happens—because then people like Natalie Alcoba, ace journalist, tough questioner, takes-no-prisoners newspaper person, is going to be on the phone to the Honourable Jim Watson, saying, "Well, Minister, what now?" It's going to be the old, "How now, brown cow? What are you going to do now? Are you going to deliver? You've got your Bill 70. What are you going to deliver? Let's see. Where's this posse of yours, riding into Hamilton, rounding up these bad-guy, rip-off artists?" Sorry; there ain't no posse, ain't no sheriff, no boots, no spurs, no horse, no hat, no six-guns—just the yapping, just talk.

The minister knows, because he demonstrates it every time he rises, that talk is cheap. "Oh, I can't get my bill through. That's why I can't protect consumers in Hamilton." Well, nobody stopped you from proclaiming the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. The bill has already been passed. The really hard work has already been done. Are you lazy or just incompetent? Or are you just here for a good time and not a long time, Minister? Are you

sort of just happy to be here? You know—Jim Watson: "Make me minister. Make me minister of anything, just as long as you make me minister." Well, you got the car, you got the driver, you got the bucks, you got the salary; you're a six-digit income earner here. I tell you: time to deliver. Like the guy said in the movie, "Show me the money."

1640

Well, the remarkable thing is, I bet you that the spinmeisters, that the backroom folks, that the high-priced consultants, the Liberal hacks who are on their \$1,000-a-day consulting jobs, are busy right now writing the new spin lines, the next excuse for why this minister does squat about health club rip-offs, fitness club rip-offs, private gym rip-offs of what, according to the Hamilton Spectator, is hundreds of people. It is an industry that has, from time to time, been plagued by this problem.

Far be it from me to tell Ms Alcoba what to write, and I wouldn't think of it, but it seems, from what I read in the Hamilton Spectator, it's a little like a pyramid scheme. Premier Fitness—am I right?—is constantly taking from Peter to pay Paul, dare I say it. Your property taxes not paid here. You are bringing in membership fees, you're stalling refunding people money, because you're using that money to pay property taxes or salaries and because, presumably, it is a private corporation.

Look, I've got no qualms about people making money. I'm one of those left-wingers who thinks there is nothing good enough for the working class and every worker should be paid real good, fair wages, because the more money people make, quite frankly, the more they can afford to pay taxes and keep building public things like public health care and public education.

The young pages here—before I came here, I was a lawyer. I made a lot of money then; it was the 1980s.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): You had a Corvette?

Mr Kormos: Well, I got the Corvette after I traded in the Porsche, because I didn't want to appear ostentatious. I want you guys to make twice as much money as I ever made in my good years as a lawyer. Do you know why? Because I am one of those baby boomers, that big, huge blip in our population who are now rapidly approaching or are in middle age. We are going to need you making lots of money so you can pay taxes to keep me in a long-term-care facility when I'm 80 years old, should I live that long.

Think about it. Think about how I started this talk today. I started it by talking about SEIU members, Service Employees International Union members, who are workers at Extendicare, the private, long-term-care facility down in St Catharines, where we learned about the abuses being heaped on our folks and our grandfolks in those long-term-care facilities in the interest of the profit. I praised those workers, those health workers in long-term-care facilities for their professionalism, for their commitment, for their hard work, for their passion

to make sure those folks are treated better in long-term-care facilities.

I tried to tear a strip off this government—I think I did—because this government has broken every promise it made to seniors in this province and, as I say, however disgusting the observation is, has left folks to sit in their own waste. Our grandfolks are sitting in their own waste for hours at a time in seniors' homes because there are rigid budgets and controls on when their incontinence supplies can be changed, their adult diapers, if I may. Bathing, with this government, is restricted to two baths per week. Mr Bring Your Own Wine, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, chooses to blame everybody but himself for this government's inaction on the consumer protection file.

Well, the crying and whining and moaning and groaning and complaining and carrying-on and feet-stomping and temper tantrums and the finger pointing and the blame-everybody-but-don't-accept-responsibility-yourself Mr Watson, minister aarschnoddle, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the ball is now in your court. Yes, Minister, it is. Don't hide. Don't slink away. The ball is in your court. Now what is your excuse going to be? The dog died? The donkey ate your homework? What's your excuse going to be? The whining is over.

Oh, wait, here's Mr Klees. Mr Klees says, "Yeah, that's right. He's going to blame it on a pit bull," or maybe a Staffordshire terrier or maybe a puppy that looks like a pit bull or a Staffordshire terrier.

This government has been obsessed with—look at its agenda. I keep trying to tell this government, you pass legislation by calling it, debating it and then putting it to a vote. That's how legislation passes. Any kid in grade 5 civics—and all of you go to those grade 5 classes, right? You talk to young people in grade 5, and we talk to grade 10 as well. You know this. You know it. You're darned right you know it. The young page over here—come here for a minute, please. Evan knows it. Thank you, Evan. Would you take that back to Ms Horwath, please? Thank you. Evan the page knows it. He has done grade 5 civics. He knows that you pass legislation by calling the bill for first reading, no debate on first reading—first reading's a freebie—call it for second reading, debate it and, when the debate's over, you vote on it. If you've got a majority government—by the way, guys, you've got a majority government. It wasn't my choice, it wasn't my druthers, but you got it.

A majority government means there's nothing opposition can do to stop you. It's like you're driving one of those great big asphalt-eating machines that goes down the QEW and just churns up—have you ever seen those? It peels off the surface layer. It's like the Queen Mary, the transatlantic cruiser. It's huge. That thing could bulldoze over anything. But I've got to tell you, your organizational skills are lacking. Maybe some of those self-help books would be instructive. It would be like, How to Get a Bill Passed. Maybe the Dummies series can write a book for the government: Passing Bills for Dummies,

Calling Legislation to be Debated for Dummies. You've got to call the bills to get them passed.

You can't have first reading of Bill 70 in April and then not call it again until November and say, "Why didn't the bill pass?" I sent a page down to the library to get me the history of the bill in the House. "Have the library print out this page for me." Did you go down there for me? Yeah, you went there for me. No, no, I don't need you now. You went there for me. I appreciate it.

The page brought back the history of the bill. First reading, voted on April 29—catch this, Ms Andrea Horwath from Hamilton East, a brilliant legislator, a wonderful addition to this NDP team here at Queen's Park: It was called for first reading and voted upon April 29; second reading isn't called until November 2 of the same year. Now, let's go through this: April, May, June, July, August, September—five months—October. You waited over six months. You sat on the bill. It was gathering dust. It was lingering in some damp, dank, dark storage room.

I've got to say to you, Minister, if you don't have clout with your House leader, I can't help you, because, quite frankly, your House leader is no fan of mine. We just don't get along that well. I'm not sure I have very much clout with your House leader, although I did get him to call the bill today, finally, for third reading, because, quite frankly, we would very dearly love to see you hoisted on your own petard, Mr Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Mr aarschnoddle minister. That phrase—there's no exact translation, but it's to distinguish oneself amongst a group.

And here you are. I've got a feeling the bill is going to pass. If the bill doesn't pass tonight when it goes to a vote, it's going to be a mockery. A majority government—whoops, what is going on here?

Mr McMeekin: I'll bet it's going to pass.

Mr Kormos: McMeekin's a betting man. He's going to bet it's going to pass. I'm not going to take that bet because I don't want to give you my money today. I don't have any, Mr McMeekin. The problem is, though, when the bill passes, what's the minister's excuse going to be then? Jeez, what's the problem going to be, what's the hurdle going to be, what's the brick wall going to be?

1650

Thank God we have the Hamilton police. Thank God we have the cops down there—right, Ms Horwath?—doing criminal investigations. Because if those folks getting ripped off had to depend upon this government, they'd be waiting till the cows came home. It would be an awful cold day in hell before any of them get their money back. You can bet your boots on that.

So at 6 o'clock tonight, what's the excuse going to be? The problem is, this gang—one of the Tories referred to them as the gang that couldn't shoot straight. I talked about them yesterday as the group that couldn't organize a drunk-up in a brewery on a good day. That's how disorganized they are. They just simply can't get their act together, notwithstanding they have their hand in the

provincial revenues cookie jar up to the armpit. You understand that; right? They have unlimited access to money, spending money hand over fist on glossy brochures that they distribute, promoting themselves in a very partisan way, notwithstanding what they promised during the election. But they won't staff up the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, no sir, no ma'am, no way.

The next question to ask the minister is, how many investigators do you have working there and what's the difference between the investigators there in the year 2004 and in the year 1994, 10 years ago? That would be a most revealing question. Make sure you get told the truth, though. You wouldn't want a member of the press to be misled. That means fact checking. With these guys, you have to fact check, fact check, fact check. With these Liberals, it's all about fact checking. If you don't fact check, you're going to be done like dinner.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Horwath: It's interesting that I'm the only one who has any comments on the speech of my friend and colleague from Niagara Centre, Peter Kormos. People will know that Mr Kormos is very well-read and very well informed with regard to the history of the bill and what it contains and what it doesn't contain. He spent his leadoff hour quite appropriately outlining not only what the bill has in it, but also what it doesn't have in it. Quite frankly, that's what the Liberals promised it had in it and, in fact, it doesn't. He was going through the bill again and reaffirming that in fact it doesn't have in it any of the things the minister claimed it does. That's a very disturbing thing.

I look forward to taking the opportunity in my 20-minute speech tonight to outline some of the concerns that I have in regard to what this bill lacks.

I have to tell you, as a big omnibus housekeeping bill, it does a few things here and a few things there. It's not an offensive bill. It's a so-so bill. I think the member for Niagara Centre actually indicated quite clearly the number of acts this bill does a few little, minor changes to, and that was the point of the bill. As far as it goes, is it a horrendous bill? No. Is it a bill that we have to rail against? No. But does it do the things the minister so opportunistically pretended it did at the time when this story broke in the Hamilton Spectator by these excellent reporters and through the research and the charges that were being investigated by our local Hamilton police officers? No, it doesn't do those things either.

I'm very pleased to take the opportunity to thank the critic for our party in this area, and I look forward to my 20-minute speech on the issue.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): This is like the NDP unplugged today. I wanted to make sure I got this straight.

I want to just put a couple of things on the record. First, our critic, Mr Kormos, has raised a number of points of interest on this particular bill. Is this bill fairly difficult to support? No. I think there are a number of

things in here that are OK. I want to echo the comments made by the member for Hamilton Centre—

Ms Horwath: East.

Mr Bisson: I always get the easts and the wests and the centres mixed up—and that is, the really unfortunate comments made by the minister vis-à-vis our member here in regard to this bill. He tried to make it look as if this bill was being held up and that somehow or other the member for Hamilton East was going to do something that was going to be negative toward a particular issue. As it turns out, that issue wasn't even contained in this bill. I say, Lord, a minister should at least know what bill he is talking to when it comes to making those kinds of accusations.

I just want to say: interesting. I know the member from Hamilton East appreciated the attention the minister got for her vis-à-vis this particular issue in her home constituency. In fact, there were a number of pretty good articles, as I remember, reading the Hamilton Spectator and others, who saw through that and said, "Listen, the minister was blowing a bit of smoke and didn't need to be doing what he was doing." I wanted to say that.

The other thing is that this particular bill doesn't amend something that I think needs to be amended, and that is a number of issues that we need to deal with when it comes to the building code that I know are issues that have been raised in this House before. It's rather unfortunate—

Mr Kormos: Does it have anything to do with fitness club frauds?

Mr Bisson: We can go into that later. But there are a number of opportunities we get like this where a government brings in a bill that makes various changes to legislation. It's sort of an omnibus bill. I would just hope, when we do, that the government involves the critics a bit more so that we're able to look at some of the other things that we could contain within the bill itself.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Niagara Centre in response.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. First, to the deputy government House leader, Mr Caplan, who heckled both Ms Horwath and my colleague Mr Bisson, I just say this: Look, you've got it wrong. You're the heckler. You're supposed to be making them look stupid. Please, be more measured in how you approach that. The job of a heckler is to make the people being heckled look stupid, not the contrary.

Thank goodness Andrea Horwath raised this matter in the House. She's the one who brought it to the Legislature, the concerns around fitness club rip-offs down in Hamilton and the Hamilton area. She's the one who was at the head of the pack. She's the one who was calling upon the minister to get off his aarschnoddled duff and get this thing rolling. She's the one who was persistent in raising it. She's the one who has been rattling the cage. She's the one who had the courage to take on Premier and Cardillo and their scams.

I say that folks in Hamilton can rest assured that Andrea Horwath, the member from Hamilton East, is

going to keep doing that. As far as I'm concerned, she'll be doing it for a long time. I'll be, I trust, an old man watching this on the legislative channel down in Welland when Andrea Horwath is still here taking on the bad guys, making our province more than a little bit safer, making things more than a little bit more just, making things more than a little better and more than a little more prosperous for hard-working folks, for parents and their kids.

New Democrats are proud of our record on exposing this government's shortcomings, this government's broken promises, this government's inability to manage any agenda, never mind its own, and this government's abandonment of the hard-working people, the women and men of the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Hamilton East.

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise and debate Bill 70 tonight. The most important thing that everyone, I think, around here would agree—in fact, I'm sure would agree—is the fact that everybody in this chamber right now wants to do the right thing by consumers. That's the bottom line. When we look at what we need to be attacking, we need to be attacking those businesses, those industries, those shady providers of service that are fraudulent in their activities. They're the ones that have been treating consumers and members of our communities unfairly. Everybody would agree that consumers in the province of Ontario deserve a fair shake, good value for money, respect from providers of service and respect from the businesses that they support.

Today we're debating this Liberal bill. It's a bill that purports to tighten up consumer protection. Unfortunately, it misses the mark wholeheartedly; it misses the mark completely. It's an OK bill, as I mentioned before in my questions and comments opportunity, when I was speaking to the excellent comments by Mr Kormos, the member for Niagara Centre. But the problem is, it's not a great bill. It is an OK bill but not a great bill. There are some things that it's going to do, but there are a heck of a lot of things that it's not going to do. Quite frankly, it's the things that it's not going to do that concern me; it's the things it's not going to do that were claimed by the minister it was going to do that are really a big concern.

1700

First of all you will know, after having looked at this bill for some time now, that it is massive bill; in fact, it's something we call an omnibus bill, similar to the Conservatives' bill, or many bills that the Conservatives brought forward in their time in government, that the Liberals constantly railed against. They constantly opposed the presentation of omnibus bills by the Conservatives in eight years in opposition. Back then, Liberals actually believed in debating bills and improving them through debate. Liberals did.

It's funny how things change when you're the government. I went back in the records and tried to look at some of the quotations that various members of the current government brought forward when they were in the

opposition benches. Here is one: "This is a very comprehensive bill. It's been alluded to a couple of times tonight that there's little question that we should support it. Certainly to the extent that it goes to protect consumers, I'm quite ready, willing and able to do that. What I do want, though, is for us to have the opportunity to debate the bill, to point out some of the shortfalls that may be in the bill and to discuss those issues that may not be in the bill that we feel should be. Our support of the bill will of course be dependent on the democratic process that is left in this Legislature." That was a quote by Bruce Crozier, Liberal MPP.

Here is a second one: "I think it is an important piece of legislation that deserves a lot of scrutiny. I'm glad we have an opportunity to raise some issues in regard to"—the bill in particular at that time was Bill 180. "Maybe the government will be able to make a better bill by our comments." Again, laudable suggestions, a laudable perspective of the then opposition Liberals. That was Mike Colle, Liberal MPP.

As is characteristic of the Liberals, as we've seen time and time again, their position has changed now that they're in government. Now they castigate us, as the opposition, for trying to debate the bills that they're bringing forward. Where they were defending the right to do so when they were in opposition, somehow we don't have the same right to do that when we are in opposition. Interesting. It's hard to say what's most striking: the dramatic changes in their positions or the dramatic number of broken promises they have had.

Now that they are the government, they want to rush through legislation and they want to pass this omnibus bill without our having the opportunity to debate it. If the minister is in such a hurry to have the omnibus legislation approved—and as I said, this bill is a so-so bill at best—maybe what he should doing—maybe he is there now. He could be doing that now, and it would be a great thing if that's what he is doing right now. He could be in his office, signing off on the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. That's what he should be doing. In essence, it's the same bill. The only difference is that the earlier bill was queued up and ready to be proclaimed into law. It was ready to go. All that was required, all that is currently required, was the signature of two cabinet ministers. But this minister instead chose to delay. He chose to delay, he chose to grandstand, he chose to hold off improving consumer protection in Ontario for a full 14 months and played partisan politics instead. He has let a virtually identical bill sit in limbo since October 2003. Shame on the minister for that.

If the matter is so urgent to the minister all of the sudden, why didn't he do anything sooner? Why wasn't this done a year ago? He has done nothing but blame others for his failure to move quickly on this bill. He made people wait for consumer protection, and that's not even as good as the law that's sitting in his office right now. He actually has a bill here that makes some minor changes to numerous bills. But the bottom line is that it could have been done very quickly; it could have been

done some time ago; it could have been done, in fact, immediately after taking government back in 2003. We have waited all this time. When you look at Bill 70 and read through it, when you look at the section that deals with the Consumer Protection Statute Law Amendment Act, 2002, you'll see that in fact this bill was waited for for nothing. We waited about 14 months for nothing in terms of consumer protection changes. One of the things that is very frustrating is that when it comes to the protection of consumers, I don't think we should be settling for second-best; I don't think we should be settling for waiting around for the minister to find something he can get busy with, as opposed to doing the right thing.

They wanted us to wait; we've waited. And the bottom line is, the bill does nothing but minor housekeeping changes. They'll spin it any way they want, but everybody who has the opportunity can go on-line and find it themselves once it becomes legislation. You'll see very clearly that there's very little that this bill actually does.

It's not the time for these kinds of half measures right now in Ontario. As you can see from the problems we've been having in Hamilton with Premier Fitness Club particularly and its record of consumer rip-offs, the bottom line is that right now is when we need a fulsome set of consumer protection initiatives, and they're not here. Consumers deserve the best and the strongest protection and the bottom line is, the Liberals have chosen to ignore the improvements that need to be made in this bill in favour of their own watered-down version of things.

The problem I see is this: The minister did nothing to move that bill along. He put this bill forward instead of just signing off on the one that was sitting there. We've been dealing with this omnibus piece of legislation. It was sitting on a back burner because there are so many bills there that it hasn't received the priority of the government. But finally, thanks to the help of the *Hamilton Spectator*—and I have to say that I think Mr Kormos mentioned three reporters in his debate earlier today, but in fact the initial story had the byline of five reporters. I know that some of them were doing a lot of research in the background on this story—certainly Natalie Alcoba, who's here with us tonight; Steve Arnold as well; Steve Buist, who was also mentioned by Mr Kormos; Tara Perkins; Joan Walters; and, of course, Dan Nolan, who was also mentioned. These are all of the reporters on the *Spectator* staff who have been working on this story.

One of the things that's really of concern is that people need to know that Bill 70 really doesn't do anything in terms of improving their rights and their powers when it comes to consumer protection. It doesn't do a darn thing. So even though there's all this bluster and all this complaining—and I think my friend called the minister the bring-your-own-whine minister because of all the complaining and whining that has been going on in the last little while in regard to this issue. When you look at it, it's all for naught because there's really nothing in here that makes one iota of change to protect consumers.

Quite frankly, it's really just a bill about housekeeping. It's minor wording changes. I can actually open the bill and read the sections that are appropriate, if you think that would be helpful; I really don't, because that legislative language is actually a little bit tough to get through and it chews up time, so there's really no point in doing that.

But the bottom line is, housekeeping is one thing; real consumer protection is another. But you know what? I'm not saying that housekeeping isn't important because, to some extent, everybody knows that housekeeping is important. So it's not a matter of whether this particular bill, as it sits, is a good bill or a bad bill; the issue is that the minister inappropriately called this bill a new consumer protection bill, and that is not what it is. This bill has been put out there as the panacea, as the answer, as the response, to the great work that was done in my community by my police force and by my local newspaper. As a response to that, it has been held up as the big answer, as the big solution to this very frustrating and, quite frankly, ongoing problem.

The reason the Conservatives brought the bill forward back in 2002 was because this problem has been going on for over a decade in Ontario. The Conservative government got it on their agenda, they drafted the legislation, it went through all of the process that goes on in this particular place, and where does it sit? It sits on a shelf somewhere because somebody didn't bother to pull it off, dust it off and sign on the bottom line to get it enacted. Quite frankly, that's unacceptable.

There are far more important consumer issues that need to be addressed by the ministry. The action is far overdue. We all know that not only Premier Fitness but a number of other unscrupulous companies exist. They're abusing pre-authorized chequing, they're abusing pre-authorized payment plans, they're raiding customers' credit cards. It's all here. I've got all of the clippings from the *Hamilton Spectator* articles, and you can read through them. A little bit later on, I'm going to give you some of the examples of what real people have been dealing with on this issue in community after community across this province.

1710

The problem is that Bill 70 doesn't curtail chronic offenders, fly-by-night businesses and corporate con artists; it just doesn't do it. It doesn't make that scenario any different for the vulnerable consumer, the vulnerable person looking to get involved with a fitness club or other types of businesses. There's no effective escape clauses from bad contracts and bogus claims. They're just not in there; they aren't. It doesn't protect airline ticket buyers if an airline goes out of business, which is one of the other claims that the minister has made. The bottom line is that what the consumers of Ontario really deserve is the very best we can offer in terms of consumer protection.

Again, in Hamilton, thanks to the diligent reporting of the *Hamilton Spectator*, one particular unscrupulous fitness club is being exposed. I suspect many others are

watching their Ps and Qs to make sure that they're not going to be the next ones that are in the public limelight in regard to these unscrupulous practices. In that five-part series, as you know, there was revelation of extremely despicable tactics that were employed by Premier Fitness, problems that were extremely serious, inappropriate and fraudulent were taking place, and they were exposed by that investigation and by those reporters.

Imagine if that happened to you: if you opened your credit card statement and found that there were monthly deductions coming off when you had cancelled your subscription to the club; and, further to that, when you called the bank, the bank didn't bother to let you know that all of a sudden these new charges started appearing again, or in fact the charges had changed. There were people who were getting charges at a certain amount, and then without authorization, without any kind of notification, all of a sudden different amounts were being taken out. In fact, the one article shows an actual statement and circles the areas where people were getting inappropriate amounts taken out of their accounts. That's just unacceptable. It's really also unacceptable that Bill 70 itself doesn't provide an opportunity to put really high-impact fines on these corporate scoundrels. It's not in there, and it needs to be in there.

The bottom line is that I've taken the opportunity to give you a few examples of who these people are. It takes a lot of effort, a lot of courage to come out publicly and to have your particular story in the newspaper. Reporters will tell you—and I've talked to many of them who are my friends—they'll say, "We often really do like to get a human face on some of these stories, so if you can find somebody that we could talk to, we'd really appreciate doing that." Oftentimes it's difficult to do because in scams like this people feel a little bit embarrassed. They have nothing to be embarrassed about. It's not their fault that they're getting—I can't say that word—unscrupulous deliverers of service causing them to have financial difficulties with their bank statements and credit cards. They're being stolen from, they're being robbed blind by these unscrupulous providers of service. It's not the individual consumer's fault, but they do feel a little bit averse to having their stories out in a newspaper.

But I've got to tell you, I've got to give it to people like Vicky McFarlane. Vicky McFarlane couldn't figure out who the heck was taking money out of her bank account—\$35.31 was appearing on her bank statements month after month after month. It was later found out, after she went to small claims court in Hamilton and won, that Premier Fitness was supposed to be cancelling those withdrawals. In fact, the fitness club had to pay her back the sum of \$282.48. It took over a year, and small claims court, and she wasn't alone. There are all kinds of examples of people in different scenarios. Vicky McFarlane was in fact from Cayuga.

There's a woman, Anna Hocevar. Anna now refuses to even have a credit card. She was so frustrated by her inability to solve the mystery, to solve the problem, and to get the credit card company to stop taking the deduc-

tions off. Again, small claims court is what solved that problem after a significant amount of time. The bottom line is, Premier Fitness had to pay \$1,096.17 in November 2001. Three years later, she still hasn't received her money, even though the judge found in her favour and she was supposed to be paid over a thousand dollars, almost \$1,100.

That is a frustrating thing for people. It's an extremely frustrating thing for people. And a lot of people just can't afford that kind of money. They can't afford to have that kind of money missing from their accounts, charged to their credit cards.

But the bottom line is, notwithstanding all these things, it is really regrettable that Bill 70 doesn't address, in any major way, in any substantive way, these problems and concerns.

I could go on and I could talk to you about the number of other people: Mary Wilkinson, Dianne Moore, Len Dezoete, Carol DaSilva, Jason Chagnon. All of these people have been unscrupulously dealt with by these fly-by-night—not even fly-by-night, by these leeches of companies that think they can just get away with whatever they want and not have any repercussions whatsoever.

The difficulty is that Bill 70—again, not a horrible bill, but it doesn't do what it purports to do in regard to consumer protection, and that has certainly been the big frustration from my perspective. When I first learned about these issues and started doing some of my own research and investigation into what was happening, I tried to figure out why these things can go unattended, only to discover that a bill has been sitting on the shelf, that legislation has been sitting on the shelf gathering dust since 2002. It could have been passed over a year ago. It hasn't been passed yet and is still sitting there. It's a pretty frustrating thing.

For weeks, I have been calling on the minister to start posting those names on Web sites, get those names up there, let wary consumers have a place where they can go to see who these unscrupulous companies are, to see where charges and convictions have taken place so that they can at least beware. You know, like, caveat emptor, buyer beware. Well, there is a role that the minister could have been playing to make those people have the opportunity to be aware of what was happening in the marketplace. But no, that hasn't happened either.

So not only is the legislation not off the shelf, not signed off, the Web site is not up. Between 1999 and 2003, the ministry received 700 complaints about Premier Fitness alone; another 1,200 complained about health clubs in 2003, an increase of 50%.

There was no shortage of examples in the *Spectator*. I have named maybe half a dozen or so. Others who didn't tell their stories number in the thousands.

The real bottom line here is that this legislation will likely pass because it's, as I said, a so-so piece of omnibus legislation. It amends, with minor language changes and a few changes in regulatory abilities, I don't know, a dozen or so different provincial acts.

But the unfortunate thing—in fact, the unacceptable thing—is that it doesn't do what the minister has been claiming for weeks that it's going to do. Quite frankly, it doesn't do anything to protect the consumers of Ontario. It doesn't do anything to close down those unscrupulous, bad-apple corporations that have been ripping people off left, right and centre across the province for decades.

Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to raise this sham. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker: It's time for questions and comments.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Isn't anybody else speaking to this important bill before us today? What's the matter with everybody? That's why we're here: to debate.

Hon Mr Caplan: Your House leader asked us not to, so we agreed not to.

Ms Churley: Oh, OK. They've reached an agreement here.

Hon Mr Caplan: There is an agreement.

Ms Churley: All right. Well, let me put my two cents' worth in here. I will be speaking to the bill in a few minutes.

I want to congratulate the member for Hamilton East for her work and thank her for her work on this issue. She certainly knows far more about it than I do.

I am the former consumer and commercial relations minister—that's what it was called then—from the days when we were in government. We did bring in a lot of very important legislation when we were in government, and I recall that these kinds of consumer issues often get left behind in any government's legislative agenda. So I'm very pleased whenever a minister from any government brings forward legislation that improves things for the consumer.

As the member for Hamilton East pointed out, there were some false claims about what this bill would actually do. When the member for Hamilton East raised the issue around the Premier Fitness club and the people who were being ripped off in her community, the claim from the Liberals was, "Well, if you hurry up and pass this bill, it'll solve all the problems." First of all, we weren't holding the bill up. We can't. There are only eight of us here. There's only so long we want if we think it's an important bill to talk about, and I think talking about consumer protection is extremely important, particularly what happened and the false information that was put out in Hamilton around the member for Hamilton East's question, that this bill in fact is not going to do anything about this situation—false information.

I want to congratulate her, and I want to congratulate the Hamilton Spectator for the fine, fine series they did on consumer problems, not only in Hamilton, but I would say they are reflected right across Ontario.

1720

Mr Bisson: I know that my good friend Marilyn Churley for Toronto-Danforth will be up next, and she has a number of things to say about this as a former minister of consumer and corporate relations, or, as we

used to call her, the elevator lady. There used to be a time that the ministers of consumer and corporate relations had their names in elevators in any community across the province. For some reason we don't do that any more, which we'll talk about some other time. I just—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I thought it was pretty good, I've got to admit. It comes with practice. Not a problem.

The other thing—and I'm going to get a bit of time later and I'm going to talk about this more at length—is the whole debacle in regard to the Electrical Safety Authority. I know the director. I've had these chats with her before and I know she's trying to do a fine job. But the reality is that prior to the government's privatizing electrical inspection, if you were an electrician and wanted to get a permit for inspection, you called Ontario Hydro, got your electrical permit, Ontario Hydro would send the inspector to inspect the job, and once the job was completed and the final inspection was given, you were given a signoff on the permit and away you went; that was the end of that. Rates were pretty reasonable. Ontario Hydro had good inspectors. They were available in most communities, at least with the Ontario Hydro side, and with the local PUCs on the other side.

The former Tory government privatized it. They created the ESA, the Electrical Safety Authority. Now you pay rates that are far in excess of what you ever paid before. And try to get a Hydro inspector if you're somewhere on Highway 11 and you need to get a job done. For example, a person I was talking to in Opasatika had an electrical problem. Basically, the electrical service had to be changed: 40 below outside and the furnace—nothing would work. What happened was that they couldn't get an inspector because the inspector had to be dispatched out of North Bay and they had to wait three days without electricity. Talk about a sad state of affairs.

Mr Kormos: It's sad, it's regrettable, that the rules permit Ms Horwath only 20 minutes. You see, this is the whole point. The rules are very rigid about how long you can speak to any given piece of legislation, and that's it. The lead-off gets an hour and then it's 20 minutes, 20 minutes, and eventually down to 10. So for anybody, for the whiny minister to somehow talk about Ms Horwath blocking it—what, with a 20-minute speech? I know that with her thorough familiarity with the issue, Ms Horwath could have kept going. But 20 minutes is the maximum, end of story. Like the guy on the cooking channel says, "It ain't rocket science." You do the math. Eight New Democrats can't block a majority government's bills.

What does slow down the progress of bills with a majority government is their own incompetence, their own lack of organizational skills, their own infighting. What you've got is ministers competing with each other to get their bills passed because ministers consider them a feather in their cap. So you've got ministers piling all over each other. It's like a football scrum. You've got ministers climbing all over each other's backs. They've got footprints on their backs to prove it, getting ahead of each other to get their bills presented.

I suppose I should say I'm sorry that the minister of consumer and commercial relations, Mr Watson, lost the fight in cabinet to get his bills advanced. His bill was introduced for first reading on April 29, and then the government never called it until November 2. That's five or six months. That shows the level of priority the government had for the bill. New Democrats don't control that; it's the government that controls the passage of bills. Why don't they come clean and be straight about that?

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Hamilton East in response.

Ms Horwath: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues Marilyn Churley from Toronto-Danforth and Peter Kormos from Niagara Centre.

It's quite interesting, as someone relatively new to this chamber, to watch how these various efforts take place. The bottom line is, what doesn't need to be watched is legislation sitting on a shelf, gathering dust for the reasons of political opportunism. That's what happened to the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. It's still sitting there, waiting for signatures. It could be enacted at any time. It's very disconcerting and difficult when everybody in this chamber knows that it's sitting there, when everyone knows that this legislation that's been held out as somehow a panacea for consumer protection contains nothing that's going to make a difference, while the real deal is sitting on a shelf somewhere, gathering dust. It's not something the minister should be proud of. It's not something that is doing any good for the consumers of Ontario when the protection they need is sitting on a shelf, gathering dust. It can be enacted. It should have been enacted. Because the Hamilton Spectator in my community decided to do an investigative report, a five-part series on a particular fitness club, all of a sudden the steam is on for a bill that does nothing.

The subterfuge begins, and the consumers are left out in the cold are; the very people whose lives and whose stories are being told in the pages of the Spectator are left out without consumer protection. It's unacceptable, it's inappropriate and we really need to get on with the business of protecting consumers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Churley: I'm glad I have an opportunity to talk to this bill today. As I mentioned in my little two-minute statement a few minutes ago, I'm a former Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. That's what it was called then. The ministry is a mere ghost now compared to what it used to be when I was the minister. It's a shell. It hardly can do the work that's still within its mandate. That is the stuff that was still left, that wasn't privatized, gotten rid of or downloaded by the previous Tory government, with so many staff laid off.

That's one of the issues here. I'll get into the more substantive parts of the bill in a minute. But one of the issues—and I keep raising this time and time again within the environmental area—is that you can bring in good laws, you can bring in perfect laws, but they aren't

worth the paper they're written on if you do not have the front-line staff to enforce those new laws. That is one of the critical problems we have before us, that the ministry is not staffed adequately to do what it's already mandated to do.

Coming back to this bill before us today, it's been raised, and it's very important to have this raised to try to understand what in heaven's name is going on here. There was all this confusion for a while when my colleague and friend from Hamilton East raised a very serious issue to the consumer minister in this House about people being ripped off at the Premier Fitness club in her riding. Then all the Liberal members were getting up in the House in answer to most of our questions, and were out and about in Hamilton everywhere, trying to blame Andrea Horwath and our caucus for holding up a piece of legislation. Talk about laying blame—just ridiculous. What's a word I can use? "Disingenuous" will do. I have other words in mind, but I think we're allowed to use "disingenuous" in this House.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Yes, because I haven't said the words, and "disingenuous" is parliamentary. But everybody knows what I mean by that.

Hon Mr Caplan: What do you mean by that?

Ms Churley: Do you really want me to say what I mean by that?

The Acting Speaker: Mr Caplan, will you take your seat now? I want the debate to continue.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Caplan is taking his seat so we can continue the debate. Do you want to continue, please.

1730

Ms Churley: OK. Sit down. There, he's sitting down now.

Anyway, I don't need to use the L word or any of those words. Everybody knows what I mean by being disingenuous. The reality is that this bill was introduced before the House on April 29, and then it just sat there after first reading and wasn't brought back into the House until November 2. Then the government came forward and said, "We want to snap our fingers and have the opposition say, 'OK, we're just going to pass it, we don't need debate,'" and then they used the situation in Hamilton to try to lay the blame on the New Democrats in particular for not allowing a piece of legislation to go through that would not have done a thing for that particular situation in Hamilton anyway.

Interjection: It's not true.

Ms Churley: It is true. That's why we were so angry and so upset over here, because on both counts it was disingenuous. First of all, we weren't holding up anything. They were holding up their own bill. Second of all, even if we had said, "OK, sure. We don't need to debate this. We trust you. We're just going to let it go through," it turns out it wouldn't have done a darn thing anyway. Talk about not being fair. That was really an unfair situation to put the member for Hamilton East in. I think

she rallied and made it perfectly clear in a hurry—she's pretty good, we're all discovering here. You may try to put one over on her but she demonstrated that it's not going to work. It's very clear this act would do nothing if passed. In fact, this is, compared to what we really need, pretty piddly stuff.

I have to confess here, as the former minister, that I worked on the Consumer Protection Act. Peter Kormos, I believe, was working on it when he was minister, and I'm sure ministers before that and then ministers after that. I'm going to hand it to the Tories here. I don't do this very much, so you'd better listen up over there. I'm going to compliment you. The Conservatives actually carried through with a new Consumer Protection Act.

Mr Chudleigh: What a great government that was.

Ms Churley: It was a great day. We were able to get up and say, "Hey, we agree with something from the Tories." I did slam them, Mr Speaker, you were there, for not putting the money into it because, as I just said, if you cut a ministry the way the Tories—it didn't last long, did it; I'm getting negative—cut that ministry, the act would have been pretty difficult to enforce because the resources weren't there.

But nonetheless, they actually got a new Consumer Protection Act passed. It's ready to be proclaimed, yet the new Liberal government—I actually don't understand what's going on here. The Consumer Protection Act, which I worked on and many of us worked on, and they built on the work that had been done, and actually to their credit completed it, and as you know, the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, whatever it's called now, is a pretty complex ministry.

When I was minister, I think we had about 58 different statutes that we were in charge of, all the way from this kind of consumer protection to funerals and cemeteries to certain components of nuclear power, elevators, real estate. We even had an obscure one called the bread act. Do you remember the bread act? It was still on the books. I don't know if it's—

Mr Kormos: What about the tag on the upholstery?

Ms Churley: And the tag on the upholstery; there was that too; do not remove those tags for fear of going to jail forever kind of thing.

There was actually one on the books that said—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Yes, one of those. Jim Bradley, who was then a critic in the Liberal Party, used to always threaten that he was going to ask me a question on whether or not I was going to get rid of this bread act. It was a statute that was brought in, I believe, in maybe the 1930s, 1940s, whenever. There was an actual law, if I remember correctly, about the length of a loaf of bread that could legally be sold to people. It must have come from bakeries. I assume at one time they would try to bake the bread a little bit smaller and rip off consumers. That's exactly why this act was brought into being, so people were not getting ripped off on the size of the bread they bought.

Anyway, the Tories did come through with the act, and it's sitting there. It would do so much more than

these piddly little amendments to the act are doing. Why do that? You're bringing in a bill that is not going to address most of the concerns raised by my colleague from Hamilton East about the fitness clubs and people being ripped off there. It's not going to do a darn thing for them. Why don't you go back to the drawing board and take it out, blow the dust off or wipe the dust off and proclaim it? We would support it. If you put the resources in, it would actually be able to do something about the situation in Hamilton and some of those other situations that the Spectator did a spectacular five-part investigative series on.

We need to see this more often. As I said earlier, consumers are being ripped off in so many areas and are often the forgotten victims. If they can't afford to go to Small Claims Court, which most people can't, to be honest, they end up not getting any satisfaction whatsoever.

I just thought of this. I wish I had it with me. I've got to tell a brief little story. This is not exactly a consumer rip-off, but it's the 407. Mike Colle was on the Goldhawk show last night. I got home from my meeting and I switched on, and there he was. There were people calling in. This is a good story, actually.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Marilyn, tell your story.

Ms Churley: I will. There were people calling in with their horror stories of how they had been ripped off by the 407. I felt like calling in but I thought, no. I wasn't exactly ripped off.

I wish I had it here, but I'll tell you the story. I got a bill from 407 and I was a little late paying it. It was \$6.75 or something; it wasn't for very much. I was a little late paying. I finally sent a cheque in. I sent the cheque to cover the total amount, the \$6.75. A couple of weeks later, I get a letter in the mail from 407. I'm thinking, "What's this?" I open it up and it tells me that I still owe 11 cents. How much would a stamp on that envelope cost? I don't know, 40 cents in bulk or whatever. So I think, "I will pay them their 11 cents or they will send it to collection agency." No doubt—for 11 cents. But I thought, "I'm not writing a check for 11 cents." So I went to my purse. I didn't have any pennies, so I Scotch Taped a nickel and a dime on to the bill and sent it to them. I felt relieved. "It's over. I will not hear from them again."

A couple of weeks later, there's another letter from the 407. I think, "Oh, what's this?" I open it up and there's a very polite little letter with a lot of paper telling me that I had a credit of three cents. They did. They spent all that money, first, to tell me I owed 11 cents. I sent them 15 cents. They sent me a letter telling me I had a credit of three cents. I might have got my numbers—

Interjection: It should have been four cents.

Ms Churley: Four cents. So there you go.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: No, instead of 11 cents, I must have sent them 12 cents, because I remember the three cents. It stuck in my mind.

Talk about efficiency. That's the private sector for you that we hear so much about. That's not a knock on all of the private sector, but that's a good example that I will be bringing up time and time again when people talk about the efficiency of the private sector compared to government.

That was a little bit off, although it is relevant to talk about the 407 vis-à-vis this bill and vis-à-vis consumer protection. The horror stories that are out there. People are being sent off to collection agencies and, in many cases, they don't owe anything. They can't get off, and it's affecting their credit rating.

This is a bill that's not going to deal—you remember that, Mr Cordiano? Weren't you the minister there once, of consumer and commercial relations?

Interjection.

Ms Churley: No, you never were. I thought you were, for some reason. You were my critic for a while.

1740

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I was probably your critic on many occasions.

Ms Churley: On many occasions, yes, that's true. I know that you and I used to talk about it, so I think you were the consumer critic for a while. You know, from being the critic for this ministry, the incredible number of consumer problems there are and the rip-offs that go on out there that need urgent attention, so, why? I understand there is an agreement, but I would love somebody to stand up from the government side and tell me why they are not proclaiming the Consumer Protection Act that was brought forward under the Tories. Why, when it would resolve this problem?

I also think, to be honest, that the minister owes an apology, if he hasn't already, to the member for Hamilton East, because I actually think what he did to her was pretty dirty. I think it was pretty down and dirty to be that disingenuous and give the impression that that member was holding up a bill that would have prevented the very problem she was talking about, when it wasn't true. Maybe, the first time he said it—I'm going to give him this—he thought that. Maybe he thought that should the bill be passed, it would have corrected the problem. But he must have very quickly found out afterwards that that wasn't the case, and he should have apologized at that point, not continued to go out there along with some of the Hamilton members, as I understand it, and whip this up and continue that myth—again, I'm choosing my words carefully—that Ms Horwath actually was holding up a bill that would resolve the very problem she was trying to fix.

That is really not fair politics. This is a very partisan place and sometimes things do get a little dirty and a little rough around here, but I don't think that's fair game. I really think he owes the member an apology for that.

I think the member wants very much to see legislation brought forward that will fix the problem, and New Democrats will support such legislation. In fact, if the government decides to proclaim the Consumer Protection

Act, the only thing you will hear from us is that we will be asking you to put the resources there so that you can actually fulfill all the new pieces in that bill. So there you are.

Here we are today debating this bill, which as I said, and other of my colleagues pointed out and others will later, is basically an omnibus housekeeping bill in a number of consumer and business service areas. More specifically, it attempts to remedy public safety and business harmonization concerns in a number of areas, including—just so people who may be watching this with rapt attention, I'm sure, know what this piddly little bill is about—none of the things I've been talking about that are needed to protect consumers, but things like electrical contracting, film classification and travel agent liability.

We understand, and my colleagues raised it and I will again briefly, because it is important, that there are significant public safety concerns in the electrical sector. I know this has been a problem for some time, created by the gaps and inefficiency in the current licensing system of electrical contractors and master electricians, and in the certification of electricians in the compulsory electrical trades. It is really important for us as a Legislature to deal with those safety concerns, and it is important that this bill go through to deal with things like that.

I understand with respect to the electrical sector, from what I know, that these proposed amendments seem to be supported by the industry and labour stakeholders. I also understand that they are consistent with the recommendations from the 2003 auditor's report. I also understand that the travel agents and film distributors are onside with the changes relevant to their industries as well.

From what I understand, there are not a whole lot of problems with this bill. As far as it goes, after we have spoken and outlined our concerns over what happened around this bill over the past couple of weeks, the legislation should go forward.

I understand there is an issue that we need to be talking about, and that is the more general protection of airline ticket buyers. While the travel compensation fund wasn't designed to compensate for end-user failure, there may be other mechanisms that could be used. I don't know. But this, as you know, is a big issue, especially what's been happening with Air Canada lately and the concerns about what happens to consumers when there are end-user failures. You bought your ticket, the airline goes out of business or whatever, and you are stuck. It's really important that protection be there for those consumers, and we don't believe what's here is adequate enough to deal with that.

I say again, as strongly as I can to the Liberal members here today, that we have eight members in the New Democratic Party. We have recently allowed, to the extent that we can allow—there's only eight of us. We're all very strong members. We have strong opinions on many of the issues that come here, and, frankly, we can and do give the government good advice. It's seldom taken, but I believe it's important. That is what opposition is here to do, to make sure that we not only scru-

tinize carefully—remember the Tories and that municipal tax bill they brought in? It had to be amended eight times. Because of closure, they rushed it through so quickly—

Mr Bisson: It wasn't a tax bill; it was an amendment to the Municipal Act.

Ms Churley: An amendment to the Municipal Act. It had to be amended eight different times in this House because they messed it up so much and didn't give us enough time to really scrutinize it.

That is one of the reasons why this is important. These are new laws that are going to impact and influence people's lives for a very long time. We are making laws in this place. It may seem that they are innocuous sometimes and why not pass them just like that, but usually you look at almost any bill, however motherhood it might be, and you can find glitches and problems with it. That's one of the roles.

I was on a TV show with a Liberal member last night, a nice guy, I really like him, David Zimmer, but he was saying, "Why does the NDP hold things up? We're going to win the vote at the end of the day anyway." Like, why debate? I mean, what an attitude.

I'm speaking out on this bill because I had some important things to say about it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Are there any other honourable members who wish to participate in the debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: I am just going to take about five to seven minutes and we'll let this get to a vote.

I wanted to put on the record a part of this bill because it is a concern to people in the electrical industry. One of the things I did prior to coming to Parliament—I'm an electrician by trade, so I speak about this with some knowledge. The government is making some amendments in this particular act to the Electrical Safety Authority. I know my friends in the Conservative caucus aren't going to like this, but I've got to tell this story anyway. I spoke about it very briefly earlier.

There was a time in the province of Ontario, when you wanted to, let's say, build a house and you had to get electrical service installed and get your house wired up, you needed a permit to have that done and it had to be conducted by a qualified person. The way it used to work was that the electrician would go to the Ontario Hydro office and apply for the permit, the permit would be issued, the inspector would come on-site at particular points during the construction stage and eventually certify that the work that had been done by the journeyman electrician was done in a manner prescribed by the law and regulations that deal with the electrical industry. That worked rather well, and I'll tell you why it worked well.

One reason is that the inspectors were qualified people. Normally, they were journeymen electricians who had been in the trade for some time, who, after a while, said, "Listen, I don't want to carry tools any more. I'd be interested in being an inspector." They basically went and applied, and then they were trained by Ontario Hydro

to understand the Ontario electrical safety code. I've got to tell you, as an electrician, that learning the electrical trade is one thing, but it's quite another thing to get into the whole issue of understanding the Ontario electrical safety code and the Canadian electrical safety code, what size conduits for particular situations, what size wires etc. There's quite a bit to it. That's why it was always good, in the old system, that you had qualified personnel who were your inspectors who understood the realities of the trade.

1750

I have to say that the record of the Ontario Hydro inspectors was very good. I don't remember very many instances, if any, where an inspector had inspected a particular building and the building, it turned out, was not properly wired or something was not done according to code. But for whatever reason, the Conservative government decided, I believe in their first term, that they wanted to get rid of the Ontario electrical inspectors. They saw this as a way of cutting red tape. They created what they called the Electrical Safety Authority. The ESA had the effect of doing a quasi-privatization of the electrical inspectors. The mantra of the day was, "This is a way of cutting red tape. It's going to be more efficient and a better way to get electrical inspections done, and it'll be a better way to organize the inspections of electrical work in Ontario." As it turns out, it had quite the opposite effect. The fees and permits that have to be paid to get a permit in the province have gone up dramatically.

The people who work there are all good people. They try hard; they work hard. This is not their fault. They didn't create this; they have to work within what was created by this Legislature. But I have to say, it is far more expensive today to get an electrical permit than it ever was in the past. I will also argue that it is far more difficult sometimes to even get an inspector to come to do an inspection.

I was telling this story in the House a little bit earlier. A constituent of mine in Opasatika had an electrical problem. The electrical service on the outside wall blew up. It was an old 60-amp service that was too loaded down and should have been changed a long time ago. Anyway, the long and the short of the story is, the thing blew up on the outside meter; the electrical system was shut down.

She called an electrician, I believe from Kapuskasing, who went in to take a look at it and said, "Ma'am, we have to change your electrical service. I would suggest that you go to a 200-amp service." Not a problem. He does the work of getting the permit because he was a certified ESA electrician, so that means that some of this stuff he was able to do himself as far as the permit. So he went ahead and did the work that had to be done to rip down the old electrical service, because you have to call the Hydro people to come in and do the disconnect, do the work and, after that, get them to come back and do the reconnect. By the time the inspector was dispatched to come back to Opasatika to inspect the electrical service prior to Hydro coming back to do the reconnection,

it was a matter of three days. Why? Because at that point we no longer had electrical inspectors in the area from Hearst to Kapuskasing. I believe the inspector in this case came from North Bay, if my memory serves correctly. It might have been a little bit closer, but it seems to me it was North Bay.

What they do is, they put the inspector on the road, and the inspector, he or she, on a schedule, shows up in various towns to do the inspections of the electrical work before giving Ontario Hydro the go-ahead to hook up the power and put it back on to the service.

Here is this woman in Opasatika, northern Ontario, in the middle of February, I believe two years ago, in 30- to 40-below-zero weather, and the house is without any electrical service for a period of three or three and a half days by the time the inspector was able to come back and do the inspection to put the service back on.

So I would say, when you look at the exercise of quasi-privatization, certainly we're paying more and we're getting far less than we ever did before under the ESA.

The other thing I just want to say very quickly is a story that most members may laugh at, but it actually happened. I had a situation where a constituent of mine—I wish we could have dealt with it in this bill, but we didn't, and that has to do with regulations under the Cemeteries Act. I had a constituent call me two summers ago. He said to me, "I went over to find out where they buried my brother." It turned out, they didn't bury the brother where he was supposed to be buried in a particular community. So here was the brother, who wanted to come back and visit where his brother was buried—he went to the cemetery, he went to the spot he was supposed to find his brother, and found another name. He figured, "I must be wrong," looked around the cemetery and never was able to find him. It turned out they had buried the guy in the wrong place in the cemetery and had not marked the grave.

Obviously some regulations are needed to make sure we have proper regulation when it comes to the issue of being able to register gravesites so that if a family member wants to come back and find a deceased member of the family some years later, there is actually good record-keeping. In most cases that happens, but we still have in this province certain private cemeteries, and that's what happened in this particular case. I really find it too bad that the minister didn't get a chance to do that.

I know we've talked at length about what happened to my good friend Andrea Horwath from Hamilton East, where the minister said, "Oh, we need this bill, and if we don't get this bill passed, all these companies out there are basically ripping off consumers when it comes to fitness clubs," like I belong to and go to every day.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I've turned over a new leaf, you've got to know.

Basically it was, "They can't get their money back until the bill is passed," but it turns out that's not even in the bill. But we've talked about that at length. I wanted to

put those fine comments on the record. I know, Speaker, you wanted to hear them, along with everybody else in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other honourable members who wish to participate in the debate? Reply from the parliamentary assistant? No.

The minister has moved third reading of Bill 70. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): The member from Oak Ridges has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): At the outset, I want to say how disappointed I am that I've had to call this special debate on this issue. I am also disappointed that the minister appears not to have the courage to deal with this debate himself and has chosen to send his parliamentary assistant.

I want to put in context the reason for this debate. Earlier, in question period today, I put a question to the Minister of Education that dealt with an announcement that was going to be made that this government was launching a major program of putting in place in elementary schools in our province daycare centres that would accommodate children in junior kindergarten. That entire proposal, of course, is fraught with impossibilities. The reality is that school boards cannot afford to do this. We have heard from many across the province who understand that this announcement would have been impossible to implement.

The question I put to the minister was, why is this government so concerned about issues such as daycare within our elementary schools when there are priorities that have been brought to the attention of the minister that he and his government should be addressing? I specifically referred to the issue of children's treatment centres in, for example, York region.

On record is the director of education for York region. He wrote a letter. In that letter he said, "By 2006, using the conservative estimate of the 1991 HALS study, there will be almost 14,000 children with disabilities living in York region without the support of a children's treatment centre. According to the CTC role review estimates, we believe there are now over 3,800 children and youth with multiple special needs, over 200 of them medically fragile, living in York region."

Speaker, I know that you too have addressed this because this relates not only to York region, but to Simcoe as well. There is a desperate need within York region and Simcoe for a children's treatment center for very desperately needy children. This government has taken it upon itself to continue to make frivolous announcements—bumper-sticker politics is what it amounts to—for new programs. First of all, the government cannot afford these new programs. There are existing programs within our province that this government should be focusing on and should be funding. Instead, they continue to make these announcements.

1800

That is the question I put to the Minister of Education: Will you, as minister, understand the importance, the desperation that parents and children are in now and put aside this initiative on the part of this government to put in place daycare centres? No one is saying that daycare centres are not important, but it is a matter of priority, and the priority is for the identified needs of the children in York region and other regions within this province.

Mark my words: When we hear from the parliamentary assistant, I venture to say that she will not answer this question either. The people who will be reading Hansard, who are watching us tonight, the parents and the children, the director of education for York region and others in Simcoe will be looking to see whether this parliamentary assistant is finally going to make the commitment to fund the children's treatment centre for York region as a priority, to ensure these children's needs are looked after.

That is the issue I wanted to address this evening: not whether daycare centres are important, but that this government understand the importance of children's treatment centres to the welfare of these young children within the region of York and other school districts in this province. That is the issue, and until this government understands that priority, they do not have the right to consider themselves leaders in education.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member from Don Valley West, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Mr Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, has included a number of questions in his speech. He talked specifically about a treatment centre, which actually is another issue. It's an issue beside the point of the announcement that was made this morning.

I want to address the issue—

Interjection.

Ms Wynne: Treatment centres are another issue. We understand how important treatment centres are, which is why we increased their funding by 3%, an increase that hasn't been made for a number of years. The point we have to address here is that this member fundamentally believes in private education. I think we need to remember that the private school tax credit is part of his belief system, so we are dealing with a different philosophy.

Mr Klees: Just answer the question.

Ms Wynne: The answer to his question, which was whether we will abandon this plan, is no.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Don Valley West, take your seat, please. The member from Oak Ridges, I am having difficulty hearing the speaker.

The Chair recognizes the member from Don Valley West.

Ms Wynne: I apologize, Mr Speaker. I didn't see that you had stood up.

I heard Mr Klees ask a question about whether our government would abandon this plan that was announced today, a plan that will put child care in our communities, that will help all families and all children when they are young to get a head start, to get a better start on education, that will prepare kids for grade one, and that will provide families with the security they need that their children are being looked after. Will we abandon that plan? No; absolutely not.

That plan puts in place security for the largest number of families in this province. We will not abandon it; in fact, we are going to champion it. What this Best Start vision does is outline a 10-to 15-year approach that will create excellent hubs of early childhood care and education in our communities. They won't look the same in every community, and again, this complexity is something that the previous government really could not grasp. It couldn't grasp that each community—I actually grew up in York region. I know quite a bit about York region.

Mr Klees: Well, then you should know better.

Ms Wynne: I know that York region is dealing with issues that downtown Toronto doesn't necessarily deal with, that Rainy River doesn't deal with, that Kapuskasing doesn't deal with. What we know is that the Best Start plan has to be customized to approaches that work in every community. If children are going to get the speech therapy they need, if they are going to get the early screening they need, we're going to have to figure out in each community how to deliver that. But that's what the plan is about.

What happens when you don't have a plan? When you don't have a plan, you make ad hoc decisions—

Mr Klees: That's exactly what you're doing.

Ms Wynne: No, absolutely not. This is a plan. What we are not doing is putting in ad hoc systems that don't work. We are laying out what we see as critical. In fact, the report that was commissioned by the previous government, by Margaret McCain and Fraser Mustard, was never implemented. That is a travesty. What Margaret McCain has said about Best Start is, "This program is a fulfillment of everything we envisioned in 1998 with our Early Years Study. This was our vision and hope for Ontario and indeed for Canada."

Interjection.

Ms Wynne: The member for Oak Ridges really doesn't want to let me speak—

Mr Klees: Because you're not answering the question.

Ms Wynne: —because he recognizes in fact that what we are doing is the right thing.

I was a public school trustee. I know there will be challenges to introducing child care into every school in the province or in every community. I know there will be challenges. But we're going to work with municipalities, we're going to work co-operatively with them, because there is no choice in this country. There is a consensus among families, in communities, that we must have a child care plan, that we must have an Early Years plan, that we must deal with the problems, the concerns that young families have with their children. That's why we

put this plan in place and we're going to make it work. It is the right thing to do.

I am sorry that the previous government and the member for Oak Ridges will not be at our side, working with us and working for the families of York region. We will work for the families of York region. We will make sure they have the services they need. That's what Best Start is about.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm.

The House adjourned at 1807.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 25 November 2004

Jeudi 25 novembre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 novembre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ACCESSIBILITÉ POUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 22, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 118, An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the Act for persons with disabilities / *Projet de loi 118, Loi traitant de l'élaboration, de la mise en oeuvre et de l'application de normes concernant l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées en ce qui concerne les biens, les services, les installations, l'emploi, le logement, les bâtiments et toutes les autres choses qu'elle précise.*

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent that, should there be a recorded division required for Bill 118, An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the Act for persons with disabilities, it be deferred until Thursday, December 2, 2004, at the time for deferred votes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Is there unanimous consent? It's agreed.

Further debate.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I would like to start out by giving a great deal of credit to our colleague the member from Burlington, Cam Jackson, who as minister responsible in the previous government took the initiative with regard to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. I know that those members who were here at the time and participated, first of all, in the development of that bill and its subsequent passage will recall the extensive consultation that took place around that bill, and also took a great deal of pride in the fact that the bill was ultimately passed in this Legislature.

I would also say that we take a great deal of pride, I'm sure members of all parties, in the fact that over the course of some eight years, while the previous government had the responsibility to deal with issues relating to disabilities and services available to Ontarians with disabilities, there was an investment of some \$6 billion over that period of time. That is unmatched in terms of the kind of commitment any government in this province has made to the disabled.

I want to say, first of all, where I have concerns about this revised version of the act because essentially, and I think all members of the House will admit, what this is in large part is the previous bill with some nuances, some changes, made to it. But at the end of the day, what I am concerned about is that essentially what this government has now done is to entrench in this legislation the reality that members of the disabled community within Ontario really can't count on anything substantive being done in the near future. Essentially, what this bill is doing is potentially disenfranchising an entire generation of disabled persons in this province. They talk about the implementation to take place over two decades plus. What hope does that leave for individuals in our province who have accessibility issues to deal with today and tomorrow?

1850

From that standpoint I am disappointed, this coming from a government that purported to make substantial strides forward on behalf of the disabled in this province, and once again they failed to do so, but that is something we've come to expect from a Dalton McGuinty-led government. The Liberal way seems to be to call a press conference, have a photo op, make the announcements and hope that people don't read the fine print, hope that people don't look beyond the 6 o'clock news, hope that people, at the end of the day, will look beyond the fact that there is little substance, if any, to the legislation they're proposing and that somehow all will be well in Ontario. We know that's not the case. From that standpoint, I simply say I'm disappointed in what is not in this bill.

Interjection.

Mr Klees: What is here? The member opposite, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, is barking across the way, suggesting I vote against it. No, Minister, I won't vote against this. I believe we should be doing what we can, as a government, for the disabled in our province. So I will be voting for it, contrary to your encouragement not to.

I don't think this is legislation that we should exercise sarcasm over. I really don't think it's something that would call for making light of the subject of debate. I'm trying to be very straightforward. I'm trying to be very sincere about what I believe we as legislators should be doing, what this government could have done and what it failed to do, quite frankly. But with the steps this government has taken I'm prepared to, certainly, and I will, vote in favour of this bill.

What is missing as well is the fact that there is no intervenor funding included in this legislation. Why is that important? It's important because, as we move into setting the regulations that will actually allow the implementation of the intent of this bill, at that stage it's incredibly important that those individuals, who know the issues, who know what the details of those regulations should contain, have the ability to come forward and advocate on behalf of their community. I shouldn't say "all," but certainly most in our province, I think you'll agree, who already have the handicap of a disability don't have the financial wherewithal to do the research and prepare the presentations. So there should be financial support for these individuals or organizations to organize and prepare the research that needs to be done to ensure that the regulations that are implemented will in fact achieve the intended goal.

This government chose not to include that, despite encouragement from the disabled community, from organizations across this province, from the official opposition and from members of the third party as well. That brings into question the degree to which this government is committed to the cause and intent of this bill. Surely it's organizations that represent the disabled community who should be empowered to participate as partners in the ultimate implementation of this legislation, but it does not exist.

What else is disappointing is what's happening in parallel to this legislation. It's one thing for a government to bring forward legislation and, as I said before, have the press conference, the grand announcement, and make statements within the Legislature, but then there is the practical demonstration of where the heart of this government really is. To that, we have to look at what this government has done in its budgets and where the delivery is on the part of this government with regard to the promises they made to these communities before they were the government. Here we have a government that made very loud promises to increase the benefits of the Ontario disability support plan.

Hon Mr Caplan: And we did.

Mr Klees: The minister of infrastructure sits in his place to say, "And we did." Three per cent. That is not what the community expected. It is not what you promised. Once again, we have a government that on the one hand is very good, very effective, at doing the photo op and making the announcements, and when it comes to delivering in a practical way, they are left wanting. So Premier McGuinty stands in his place once again speechless, because he is accused of not keeping his promises and he has no defence.

With regard to this bill, again, I'm pleased to support it. I will support it. I want to point out as well that we are hopeful, as the official opposition, that after this bill is in fact implemented, at least when it comes to the regulations, this government will be willing to work not only with members of the opposition in this House but also with members from the community to ensure that we have legislation and regulations that will truly benefit the people of Ontario.

It's interesting to note that about 80% of Bill 125, as I was saying earlier, is in fact retained in this legislation. That's the legislation that the previous government brought forward. What is happening here is that there is a dismantling taking place of the old legislation. What's fascinating is that for the first time in my time in this building, I see a government saying they're going to repeal a bill, but then they really don't repeal it. Once again, it goes to the issue of what it is that this government is really trying to do. If they wanted to repeal the bill, they should have repealed the bill and truly come forward with their own legislation that does what they promised to do, but that's not what we have here.

It will come as no surprise to members of the government benches here that the official opposition will support this bill, because essentially it really is our bill, except for those areas that you've watered down and you've thrust into the future so you don't have to deal with the cost of implementing the substantive aspects of the bill.

1900

I just want to refer to some of the comments that were made by individuals. Mr Speaker, you will know Patricia Copeland, who, in an article that appeared in the *Barrie Advance*, made a specific comment that underscores what I am saying here. She says, "The Liberals are using tested product marketing techniques to sell us all on their version of Bill 125."

She goes on to say, "It reminds me of the original Coke being upstaged by the new Coke. Frankly, when you cut through the advertising hype, it was still just Coke to most of us."

How many hours of debate have there been on this bill? Some eight hours of debate, I believe, if not more than that, and yet it's a great deal of staging on the part of this government, very little substance. Isn't it unfortunate, the hours that have been taken in this place to simply allow this government to put their branding on a piece of legislation that the previous government had already put in place? Rather than put resources to the existing legislation to ensure that it's implemented and to ensure that the people of this province can truly benefit from it, they chose to go through this smoke-and-mirrors exercise that really does nothing but defer into the future the benefits that should be realized in the near future.

I want to just read this to you because, again, I think it goes to the heart of what I am saying: "The original Bill 125 ... received royal assent on Dec. 14, 2001. It was created with a great deal of public input from municipal officials, interest groups and citizens. It was a major step forward to aid the physically challenged in our province.

"The resulting legislation provided a tool for local governments called, 'The Guide to a Municipal Accessibility Plan.' Bill 125 was 'to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities through identification, removal and prevention of barriers to participation in the life of the province.'"

We have representatives here in this House who were part of municipal governments, and they know full well what the intention of this legislation was. The fact that now we're back here in the Legislature in the process of passing another piece of legislation to repeal legislation that was based on a great deal of consultation, a great deal of input, from people across this province just leaves most of us, I'd suggest, and most of the disabled community wondering what this government is really up to.

You had an opportunity to improve and to put some substance into practice in this province that would truly benefit the disabled in Ontario. What you have effectively done is simply, as Ms Copeland mentioned, tried a rebranding exercise that leaves people in this province wondering when, if ever, they will truly see results in terms of improving accessibility in this province.

I say to you, shame on the government for allowing people to go through another exercise that leaves them no further ahead than they were before this exercise began. Why would this government not demonstrate, not through new legislation but through their budget, by allocating funding, allocating resources to the disabled community to truly help them in a practical way? That is the message the disabled community wanted from you, not more legislation that contains no regulation, that leaves everyone wondering what your real intentions will be.

As the official opposition, our role will be to work with members of the disabled community, to hold the government's feet to the fire and ensure that it takes on its responsibility and fund the necessary programs to ensure accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats will be participating in this debate this evening. Andrea Horwath, the member from Hamilton East, will be speaking to this bill. I will be speaking to this bill before the evening's over. We have concerns about the legislation; you know that. We have concerns about the fact that these 20-minute speaking slots—I suppose it's one minute for every year that folks might have to wait for the standards to be enacted. I, for the life of me, cannot understand why far shorter-term goals could not have been established for things which clearly could have been achieved within that time frame.

We're also concerned, and we're going to speak to this, that giving access to a building that is, let's say, a workplace is one thing, and it's important; but we're concerned that the act does not make it perfectly clear that "access" also means access to the job in that workplace, that access in this legislation doesn't mean that there has to be an accommodation of persons with

disabilities because, surely, "access" means more than just access to a building.

"Access" means access to the main stream of the economic activity in our province. "Access" means access to real jobs with real wages, to the economy, to the social life, the political life of the province. In that regard, I'm going to speak very briefly, when I get a chance, on how Speakers and Legislatures use privilege to immunize themselves from legislation like this. I'm concerned that that could happen here.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): In my short two minutes, I want to reply to the statements made by the member from Oak Ridges.

First of all, I want to say in general that we are, as a government, fulfilling a number of our promises. Shortly, I'd like to stand up here during an opportunity and just list the number of promises we have fulfilled. I'm getting sick and tired of hearing, "Broken promises." This is another promise fulfilled. If you want to talk about broken promises, why don't we look at the ODA, 2001, and what was stated there?

A few nights ago Mr Jackson, the member from Burlington, spoke on this issue. He stated that "there are very rigid, prescriptive outcomes required" in the ODA, 2001, the previous legislation, "for the province of Ontario, as a government, to make all its publicly owned buildings and programs fully accessible. It goes on, in its regulatory framework, to say they have 10 years in which to make this fully compliant."

However, these are the facts: No regulations were ever passed under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. The ODA, 2001, does not require that all Ontario government programs, buildings and services must be fully accessible within 10 years. There are no such time-lines in the ODA. So it's quite interesting to see members stand up today and speak so highly of a previous piece of legislation which did not contain regulations.

Furthermore—in my very limited time—Mr Jackson spoke about the fact that municipalities have to be consulted on this.

We received a press release on October 12, 2004, from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, stating the following:

"We are pleased that the government has recognized a number of recommendations made by AMO in the proposed changes to the ODA introduced today.... Most importantly, providing municipalities the flexibility required in the development, implementation and certification of standards is welcomed, as is including the private sector in the responsibility of making our communities barrier-free." This is quite positive and speaks quite highly of what our government is trying to do.

I had to miss dinner to be here tonight. At home, my wife and my parents are eating. I'm here, and I'm willing to stay as long as possible to deal with whatever legislation so that we can fulfill all our promises that we intend to do.

1910

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm very pleased to be here tonight as well to discuss and debate

Bill 118. I want to compliment the member for Oak Ridges for his fine presentation tonight. He gave a superb speech, as he always does, outlining his position on this particular bill, and he gave the House an opportunity to consider and think about the steps that were taken by the former government to assist people with disabilities. Certainly I think there was progress made during the years 1995 to 2003.

I think the provincial government currently has moved forward in the last year with this bill, and I would express my interest and willingness to support it at third reading. But it's important that the government members recognize that the opposition has an important role to play. Our role is to point out the drawbacks and the deficiencies in this legislation, which we will do, but certainly it is our intention to support it in the end.

The disabled community has to look at this legislation with, I suppose, some degree of disappointment, looking at the fact that in some cases this will be phased in over a 20-year period, which is a very long time. I wonder where the government found the 20-year number. Did they pick it out of the air, or was there some thoughtful consideration given to define the 20-year figure? Certainly there is some need for co-operation with every one of our communities to phase this in, but it is a long, long time for the disabled community to wait for what I think we all would agree is treatment that they rightfully deserve.

I would just compliment and once again commend the member for Oak Ridges on his speech tonight and his contribution to this debate. I look forward to the remaining speeches tonight.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to get up and make some comments on the debate thus far tonight. I have to say that there is certainly an obvious desire for people on all sides of this Legislature to deal with the important issues facing persons with disabilities in Ontario.

As usual, though, there's a bit of a time lag in terms of the promises that were made by the government. I know one of the other commentators on the member from Oak Ridges's debate was saying that it's a matter of a promise kept. In fact, when you look at this particular piece of legislation, it's a promise kept, flung far into the future, and that's a bit problematic. There's nothing like today to get something done; procrastination is the enemy of time, as we know. For people with disabilities, this bill is the enemy of time. It's something that's not actually going to come into full effect for a couple of decades from now, which means we're going to lose a generation or so of opportunities to be doing what needs to be done to truly and sincerely deal with barriers for people with disabilities. It's interesting, because this particular issue, having come from the municipal sector, has been on the agenda for quite some time. It's really unfortunate that the first stab at it by the government is going to leave people waiting for two decades before we have a barrier-free Ontario.

Certainly the goal is laudable. The perspective, the idea, the need to get this done is something I agree with

wholeheartedly. I just wish, quite frankly, that the time frames were collapsed, that the real efforts were made to get a barrier-free Ontario in a much shorter time frame, as opposed to having people with disabilities still sitting at the back of the line, waiting for us to recognize that they should be participating fully in all aspects of our society.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member from Oak Ridges.

Mr Klees: I want to thank the members from Hamilton East, Waterloo-Wellington, Niagara Centre and Scarborough Southwest. I find it interesting: There is obviously broad consensus in terms of the need that we all feel to move forward with this legislation.

Those of us in opposition, and I'm sure that in their heart of hearts members from the government benches also, would agree that there should be substantive funding in place, and that the timeline for implementation should in fact be much more immediate than this far-flung, 20-year time frame this legislation contains.

I find the comments from the member for Scarborough Southwest really quite intriguing when he has, frankly, the audacity to stand in his place to say that he doesn't want to hear about broken promises. I don't blame him. I would, quite frankly, be ashamed to face my constituents or anyone in the province and to be identified with this government. There isn't anyone I speak to who doesn't see this government as the government—and that's what it will be known as—that has broken every promise it has made. With regard to this, especially in the context of discussion of this legislation, to have the audacity to stand in your place and say that you have kept your promise—my friend, surely you can't believe that. Surely you yourself must also feel embarrassed that you are a representative of the McGuinty government, guilty of breaking more promises than any government this—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Kormos: I'm pleased to speak, as a member of the New Democratic Party caucus, to Bill 118 this evening. Andrea Horwath, my colleague from Hamilton East, is going to be speaking to the bill later this evening.

This is the third day of second reading debate on this bill. I expect that the bill will be put to a vote on second reading at the completion of this evening's sessional day. New Democrats are eager to see the bill put out to committee, and we believe that a broad and thorough consultation with Ontarians and communities of Ontarians across this province is critical during the course of public hearings. We expect that those public hearings will take place during the so-called Christmas/winter break during the month of January.

I also want to note that once again in the chamber is David Lepofsky. Those folks who didn't know him before they were elected—many did—got to know him real fast once they were elected, because Mr Lepofsky, whom I have known for a number of years—as a matter of fact, since a period in time when he had hair and mine had colour—has been a major and leading member of the vanguard of activists of persons and for persons with

disabilities in this province. His intellectual capacity is beyond dispute, and his input into this debate over what has been far too long a period of time has been an incredibly valuable input. His guidance has similarly been extremely important. While New Democrats are not at all pleased about the fact that the bill still sets a time frame which is 20 years from now, we acknowledge that we wouldn't even have this bill were it not for the tremendous commitment, vigour, tenacity and doggedness of Mr Lepofsky, his colleagues, and similar leaders in communities across this province, big city and small town alike.

In the two minutes that I had to address the comments made by Mr Klees, I spoke about the obvious concern that New Democrats have, and that is that the time frame is one 20 years hence. People have waited long enough, and while it's not unreasonable to understand or to expect that certain objectives may take longer than others, part and parcel of that observation is the fact that some objectives can be established immediately, and the absence of immediate goals or the very short-term goals is troublesome.

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Mr Lepofsky tells me—and I'm not telling stories out of school—that there will be a plethora of amendments offered up from the community out there in an effort to improve on this bill. I have no doubt that's going to be the case. Similarly, I have no doubt that people with a wide range of backgrounds in various disciplines are going to be addressing this bill from their particular area of experience or expertise.

While one understands why this government, or any government, is pleased to congratulate itself for steps forward, I caution this government to be, let's say, careful about self-congratulatory exercises when there is still so much to be done, even once and should this bill pass—and quite frankly, I expect it will.

One of the concerns I have is that the bill so far, in its language, seems very much to focus on this whole issue of physical access. As I said earlier, access to a job doesn't mean a ramp to the front door of that workplace; it means access to the job. It means being accommodated in that workplace so that whatever the man or woman is doing, they are permitted to do it. It means real jobs with real pay. Access to education doesn't just mean barrier-free entrances to schools: elementary schools, high schools, colleges and universities. It means the availability of the assists that are necessary for any given person to be able to sit meaningfully in the classroom—or stand or lie.

And from time to time, yes, the cost of that access is considerable; more often than not, it's marginal. But I'm concerned about a bill like this one, Bill 118, that doesn't signal very clearly that the province is committed to ensuring that the investments are made in those assists, many of them of marginal cost—from time to time, more than a few of them of significant cost—which would make the bill meaningful to each and every person in this province with a disability who desires access to that workplace, to that education.

Let's take a look at this government's attitude toward kids with autism. On the basis, I put to you, very much of cost, this government here in Ontario—and I have no doubt that it takes some comfort from the recent Supreme Court of Canada decision, although it should be cautious about wrapping itself with that decision—this province declines to treat children once they reach the age of six. And cost is the factor; end of story. Come on, the feeble argument advanced by the government in some of the litigation that, “Oh, we're not sure if the treatment works for kids,”—horse feathers. It's got nothing to do with it. It's the cost.

Like so many other members of this assembly, I have found myself advocating for constituents with special needs, some with extraordinary needs, where the issue has been the cost. People from the Welland District Association for Community Living, who may have the chance to be watching the legislative channel right now, know who some of those people are. We have found ourselves frustrated, angered and dismayed at the government's ability and willingness to create classes of deserving and undeserving persons with disabilities based on the cost of providing the treatments, the assists or the access to that person and his or her family.

The message has got to be clear in this legislation. It has to be clear. It has to be legislated. Bill 118 has to very much contain within its language that is tantamount to a declaration, a charter of rights for persons with disabilities that ensures that no government—this government or any successor government—can deny real access—not a ramp up to the front door; real access—on the basis of cost or on the basis of numbers. It's trite to observe that those persons who have extraordinary needs tend to be fewer in numbers, and the corollary of the cost argument as well, that there are only one or two or three persons in the province who have that level of need, and we can't develop a whole program just for one, two or three—horse feathers. You either believe in access or you don't, and it's got to be access for all and it's got to be access to every facet.

This building alone, this home of Ontarians' Parliament, governance, is one of the most bloody inaccessible buildings you could ever find, and continues to be, notwithstanding all the fine speeches by government after government about access.

That takes me to this: There has been an incredibly disturbing trend on the part of our Parliaments to utilize privilege as a defence to the demands of this type of legislation. At the federal level, you're well aware of the litigation surrounding a former Speaker of the House, Liberal Gib Parent, against whom a *prima facie* finding of discrimination was found with respect to one of his employees. Former Speaker Gib Parent and the federal Parliament are arguing privilege as a defence to the human rights claim, saying that a Speaker, because of parliamentary privilege, is immune from claims under the federal Human Rights Code.

Just this week, the Speaker of this Legislature, in a letter to members of the Toronto Disaster Relief Com-

mittee, who were participants in and organizers of the homeless protest and demonstration that first assembled overnight in front of city hall and then attempted to do the same—peacefully assemble—on the lawns of this assembly, argued that because of privilege, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not apply to the Speaker of the provincial Legislature or to the Ontario Parliament. That is a shameful, disgraceful, odious, cowardly exploitation of the long-held tradition of privilege.

I find it reprehensible that either the federal Parliament and its Speaker would use privilege to defend itself against a claim of human rights violations or that the provincial Liberal Speaker would similarly invoke privilege to tell Ontarians that they can't assemble on the front lawn of the Parliament of Ontario. And I say—

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Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I must say that while I agree with the sentiments of the member from Niagara, I do believe that it is very much out of order, according to the rules of this place, to call into question the acts of the Speaker in this place. And I think, in the interest of protecting the rules here, that you should ask the member to withdraw those remarks.

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to say that the member is completely out of order to challenge the Speaker's rulings. There is no place in this assembly for that challenge, and he knows that. He should know better than to challenge the Speaker of this assembly. It's a great disrespect to this assembly and all the members of this assembly for that member to challenge the decisions made by the Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. I would ask the member to ensure that all remarks are viewed through the Chair and that we remain with Bill 118 at this time.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Chair. To the Speaker, it is unconscionable that a Parliament would claim privilege to defend itself from a human rights claim. There is a trend across this country, and across Parliaments, to invoke privilege as a defence to anything from the Human Rights Code to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And this legislation, without a clear declaration of rights—

Hon Mr Cordiano: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and I'd ask the clock to be stopped.

Hon Mr Cordiano: Once again the member from Welland is showing great disrespect to the people who are listening to this debate, who want you to debate the Ontario disabilities act, and yet you're completely off topic, challenging the Speaker's decisions. I think that's totally inappropriate and disrespectful to all those people out there who would like this debate to be focused on the Ontario disabilities act. And I don't know why you're not doing that.

The Acting Speaker: I certainly heard the member speak about the accessibility within this building and how the building is under the direction of the Speaker. I

would ensure that the member continues on to speak on Bill 118. Thank you. Continue.

Mr Kormos: Well, thank you kindly, Speaker, and I appreciate the members opposite trying to chastise or somehow guide me in the course of my comments. They've been trying for 16 years. They're no more successful 16 years later than they were in year one.

Look, we've got Bill 118, which is as much a public relations exercise as anything else. Without a clear declaration of rights of persons with disabilities to the access provided for in this legislation, we risk Parliaments, for instance, invoking privilege to exempt themselves from the legislation. And this Parliament has not demonstrated itself particularly eager to make this building accessible, never mind the political activity within it.

We have communities being called upon, municipalities in excess of populations of 10,000 people, to strike up these committees, to set standards, but not a mention of investment in those communities to enable them to make the new standards meaningful by way of implementation.

It goes back to the right of access, which is a right on paper only if there isn't the investment made to guarantee and ensure that access. The right of access to a municipal sidewalk is irrelevant unless that municipality has the resources to make those sidewalks accessible, never mind the schools in that municipality, never mind the workplaces in that municipality.

The retrofitting alone—and as you know; you're here long enough, Speaker, other members longer—the availability of funding for anything from elevators onward to any number of non-profit organizations, be it churches and church halls or various social clubs in the community, has long, long expired. This government has shown no interest whatsoever in creating de facto access.

This government very much wants, for persons with disabilities and their friends and advocates across this province, to debate the standards that are going to be established without offering up any assurance whatsoever. Oh, there's the cowardly refrain of protest when I dare discuss the reluctance of a Parliament to abide by the law and its eagerness to invoke privilege, like Gibby Parent, the coward, did in Ottawa, and like the Speaker of this chamber did when he sent a letter to people from the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee telling them that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms did not apply to the Speaker of the Parliament of Ontario.

Hon Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to quote you to from standing order 13(a) and (b): "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum, and shall decide questions of privilege and points of order. In making a decision on a question of privilege or point of order or explaining a practice, the Speaker may state the applicable" ruling.

Under (b), it says no debate or appeal of the decision of the Speaker. It says specifically, "No debate shall be permitted on any such decision, and no such decision shall be subject to an appeal to the House."

The member has just done that, and repeatedly done that. Speaker, that is completely contrary to the standing

orders of this House. I would ask that you call the member to order.

The Acting Speaker: Certainly we have heard the member's comments. He has made a number of comments regarding Speakers' decisions that have been made in this House. I believe at this time that we would ensure that the member is speaking—although I don't really think he was challenging the Speaker's decision.

Hon Mr Cordiano: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think I heard the member clearly refer to the Speaker as cowardly, both the previous Speaker in Ottawa—a Speaker of a previous House of Commons—and this current Speaker as cowardly. I would check the record, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member clearly stated that it was not regarding a Speaker of this House when that comment was made; it was about another Parliament. I have no jurisdiction in another Parliament. So I think we will continue on with the member's comments. Please—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: No; we will continue on. Please remain with Bill 118.

Mr Kormos: What's cowardly are these Liberal members who try to suppress any meaningful debate around Bill 118. What's weaselly are these Liberal members who want to curtail real debate around the ultimate responsibility of this chamber. What's sleazy and slimy are members who stand up on spurious points of order, spout their garbage and indeed want to suppress debate, quash debate, and indeed don't like debate that doesn't please them. That's sleazy, that's slimy, and their constituents are sorely disappointed. What an incredible bit of cowardice from Liberal backbenchers.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Mr Cordiano: Now you've heard that very clearly. He referred to members of this chamber as sleazy and slimy, and that included everyone in this chamber, including the Speaker. Therefore, I would say that I don't think this member ought to be given his privilege to refer to members as sleazy and slimy ever again, unless he first looks in the mirror and looks at himself when he's saying those things.

The Acting Speaker: Order. We are now moving to questions and comments.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Perhaps we can have some meaningful debate. While my colleague from Oak Ridges was speaking earlier, and I thank him for his support of the bill, I made a short phone call to a very dear friend, Mr Chris Portelli, the regional representative for the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee for the region of Peel-Halton-Dufferin. Chris is watching tonight. Chris, send you my greetings from the seat in the Ontario Legislature that and you your family so very much wanted to see me occupy. To Vince And Maria Portelli, I send you my warmest and dearest regards.

Chris is disabled. He speaks from his wheelchair and needs some assistance breathing as a result of his spinal injuries years ago. Here's what Chris said to me just a

few minutes ago: "We in the disabled community look forward to working with this Ontario government to implement this new and groundbreaking legislation that is long overdue."

Within the ODA, Chris's region of Peel-Halton-Dufferin is second only to Toronto in size. He speaks for the disabled community with conviction and from a broad base of support. Much of what I learned of the issues of those with disabilities I learned from the forums sponsored by the ODA. I heard it from the lips of those who live the life of the disabled.

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Here's what those who cope with visible and hidden barriers have to say about Bill 118. They say that the bill has teeth. Unlike its predecessor, this government will actually pass regulations pursuant to this bill. We'll make it work.

ODA has asked that the outcomes arising from the bill be clear and prescriptive. In other words, the public and private sectors must do something, and do specific things to enable those with disabilities to participate as fully as possible in Ontario life.

So, Chris Portelli, for me, Bill 118 is about you. Here's to you.

Mr Klees: I'm pleased to add my comments to those of the member from Niagara, although I must say that some of the comments the member made were in fact out of order, Speaker, and I, for one, was quite frankly embarrassed by them.

Having said that, I don't blame the member for taking exception to how this place doesn't work. And I've said many times that in this place, if there were meaningful debate, then those watching us could take some heart that meaningful work was being done here. We in the opposition are making comments and proposals that we believe would improve this legislation. We have not been heard. It's my hope that members of the disabled community will be heard. If the government doesn't listen to us as members of the Legislature, then so be it, but at least we trust that they will listen to members of the community, who, as the member from Mississauga West so rightfully said, know full well what needs to be done and what should be done.

Our only hope is that this government, in the days and months ahead, will listen to the community, will ensure that the regulations that are put in place are meaningful, are constructive and, above all, as I said in my debate earlier this evening, will provide the necessary funding and resources to give credence to the intent of this legislation.

Mr Arnott: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd just like to recognize the presence in the chamber of a former member of this Legislature, Gary Malkowski, the former MPP for, I believe, York East.

The Acting Speaker: We certainly welcome the member.

Further questions and comments.

Ms Horwath: I'm not going to delve into did he or didn't he breach the rules of the House, but I do have to

say that my colleague from Niagara Centre, Mr Kormos, is quite well aware of what is in this bill and is quite well aware of what's not in this bill. And, not dissimilar from some of the other comments that were made, I think he made it quite clear that there are some improvements that need to be made, there are opportunities for not only improvements in some of the actual specifics of the legislation, but certainly, at the very least, in the time frames. That's something that's extremely troublesome to many of us.

I look forward myself to talking a little bit about what the principles should be when we're looking at this kind of legislation. In fact, I believe that there were some principles agreed to not too long ago in this very chamber, and I think it's something we need to stick to when we're looking at new legislation, a new Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

I think my colleague Mr Kormos from Niagara Centre did a very good job of outlining the issues, but also of raising the fact that it's up to us to make the difference, it's up to us to keep the pressure on, it's up to us to make sure that, with the voices of the advocates and community, we're keeping the government to account. That's the job of opposition. That's the job we're doing here. We're doing it tonight. We do it every day when we debate these bills, when we try to push the envelope and make sure the promises the Liberal government makes during election campaigns are actually fulfilled when they're in government and they're at a point where they have the power to make the differences they purported they were going to make for the province of Ontario. I look forward to seeing those promises being fulfilled, certainly by some amendments to this legislation.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to support the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004, for a number of reasons. First off, it'll make Ontario more accessible for people with disabilities. Secondly, for the first time, the private sector will be covered by accessibility standards—standards that are reasonable and achievable—and I think that's important. I also support it because it recognizes that by the year 2025, when 20% of our population may well be people with disabilities, we'll be able to ensure that with \$25 billion worth of spending power, our markets, our private sector is ready to ensure they can gain access to that market. I find that extremely important.

But the real reason I so passionately support this legislation is the respect and admiration I have for two people: Carolyn Fenn and Betty Ann McKeating. Carolyn Fenn has overcome a variety of disabilities that have affected her ability to be mobile. That has not stopped her from being a vocal advocate for tenants, public housing residents, people with disabilities, public transit and veterans. Betty Ann McKeating has overcome a variety of health challenges as well, challenges that I think would have ground most of us to a halt. For decades, Betty Ann has been a stalwart, active member of our community. She's been a strong advocate for WheelTrans, accessibility, youth and a number of other causes.

These two courageous ladies have been inspirational and effective voices in my community for decades. When I look at the challenges they've had to overcome and the work they've done in our community, I'm proud to have been able to represent them for almost a decade. When I look at this act, my appreciation and congratulations go to these two ladies. They're among many others who have pushed many different levels of government to move forward with these very important issues, and I thank them for their efforts.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre has two minutes to summarize.

Mr Kormos: I'm going to sleep better tonight, because when I hear squeals of protest from the Liberal benches, I know I'm doing something right. And squeals of protest indeed we heard. The porcine squealing I managed to provoke will, I'm sure, be echoing through here until Monday at 1:30 in the afternoon.

Gary Malkowski, former member of the Legislative Assembly, long-time friend and former colleague of mine, dropped by and left a message for me, a list of eight points that he feels are sorely lacking, and obviously lacking, in Bill 118. I'm going to give them to Andrea Horwath, because I think it's important that there be some consideration of at least some, if not all, of these serious omissions. Gary Malkowski has expertise, dare I say, and experience in this matter of accessibility, for the obvious reasons, that others don't. That's exactly the point. You've got leaders like David Lepofsky and Gary Malkowski, a long-time New Democrat and a person who served this province well as a member of this Legislative Assembly, with incredible legislative experience, who says, "Well, here's Bill 118, and we very much want to see Bill 118 go to committee."

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Mr Caplan, don't debate the Chair's ruling, please. Don't do it sotto voce; don't do it on camera. Don't debate the Chair's ruling.

Gary Malkowski is a valued member of our provincial community whose expertise is going to be an important asset at the committee hearings. The consideration, of course, has to be where those hearings are going to be held. I'm told that people want those hearings held across the province, to ensure real, meaningful access from as many people and as many parts of Ontario as possible. Let's see if the government is going to live up to that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

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Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to have a chance this evening to stand and talk about Bill 118, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. I want to start with where this came from, and I want to reiterate some of the comments of my colleagues who talk about this being a promise kept.

Before the last election, the Premier, who was then the Leader of the Opposition, wrote to the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. What did he say? He said to them, "We believe that the Harris-Eves government's Ontarians with Disabilities Act does not even begin to

adequately address the needs and rights of countless Ontarians. We will introduce ... a strong and effective ... act." I say to you that that is what we are doing tonight, what we have done and what we are debating this evening.

I want to talk a little bit about how we crafted this legislation. It goes with our government's desire to consult with experts, to consult with those who know about what we are talking about. In the throne speech last November 20, our government pledged to work with Ontarians with disabilities to develop meaningful legislation that would allow them to fully participate in building a stronger province. After that time, on December 3, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Dr Bountrogianni, marked the International Day of Disabled Persons by announcing consultations on strengthening the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

In the first three months of this year, Dr Bountrogianni and Dr Kular, her former parliamentary assistant, travelled across the province, seeking out the advice we needed to make sure we could deliver on this strong legislation. They held 14 round-table meetings, seven regional public meetings and 246 stakeholder meetings, and more than a thousand people participated. Through those organizations, through those meetings, they met with disability organizations, individuals with disabilities, the private sector, leaders from hospitals, universities and colleges, and students. All the meetings were fully accessible, and we made sure we talked to those people on the front lines who had advice to give us.

People we spoke to, people we took guidance from, were the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, and in particular the chair, David Lepofsky, who I know was here this evening and was perhaps scared away by the lack of meaningful debate on this legislation. I'm pleased to thank Mr Lepofsky for all the work he has done over the years, and for participating with us as we developed this legislation.

We also had a chance to speak to the Ontario March of Dimes, the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, the Canadian Paraplegic Association—all of those groups—along with the private sector which came forward: the Retail Council of Canada; the Greater Toronto Hotel Association; the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; the Ontario Restaurant, Hotel and Motel Association; the Canadian Standards Association; Dofasco; Canadian Tire, and the list goes on. It was through those extensive consultations that this legislation came to pass.

We took that advice and guidance, and a number of themes came forward from the consultations. We found broad consensus that clear standards leading to measurable outcomes were necessary. Many participants urged stakeholder involvement in developing the standards and enforcement mechanisms. We understood from the consultations the need to increase our understanding about accommodating employees with disabilities in the workplace. We were told that the private sector needed to strive for increased accessibility and needed to participate in this. We were also told that the process needed to be

flexible and the measures reasonable to avoid a negative economic impact on the private sector, particularly our small businesses in this province. The guidance we took from those consultations—those ideas are found in Bill 118, this proposed legislation.

I want to spend the few minutes I have talking about some specific issues. We've heard a lot of discussion about the timelines, and the timelines of this legislation. It's all well and good to set standards for installing ramps or getting menus into alternate formats or improving customer service. But unless we have timelines, and timelines that are meaningful, we are simply telling organizations that they can comply whenever they choose, which could certainly be a long way off. So the provision of timelines is a way that this piece of legislation has teeth.

The question then becomes, how long should those timelines be? We've heard discussion about the timelines. Our proposed legislation is visionary and, at the same time, I suggest that it's realistic. Mandatory standards and real results would be achieved every five years or less, moving toward an accessible society in 20 years. We are talking about a major social transformation; there's certainly no doubt about that. To achieve an accessible Ontario would mean changes to facilities, programs, services, communications and employment.

We certainly understand that on first blush, on a misinterpretation of what this legislation is about, 20 years sounds like a very long time to wait, a very long time for Ontarians with disabilities to fully participate in our province. But I want to be clear to the people watching at home, to my colleagues across the House, to Ontarians with disabilities across this province, that 20 years is not the beginning; 20 years in this legislation is the end point.

Within five years, people with disabilities will begin to notice real and fundamental change in our society and in our built environment. Ontarians would see greater access to things such as buildings, transportation, customer service and training. We're going to see within those first five years a shift in this province's approach and thinking with regard to disabilities. We understand that this significant shift, this significant transformation, cannot happen overnight, but we are anxious to get started, and this is what this legislation is doing in incremental, realistic steps.

What we can do rapidly is accelerate our progress so momentum will build and accessibility will improve, and that's what we propose to do. We think and believe that transformation will take a generation. We know that the baby boomers are aging, we know that people are living longer, and in 20 years we can expect that one Ontarian in five will be a person with a disability, a potential consumer in the marketplace and the labour market. No business or service provider can ignore those individuals.

Our approach in setting a 20-year standard is in line with other jurisdictions. For example, with regard to transportation barriers, Australia has set a 30-year time frame, with five-year goals for implementing full accessibility. Again with respect to transportation, the United

States has set a 30-year standard. What I say is that our standard is both visionary and realistic. It is 20 years, not 30 years, and it is much broader than the other jurisdictions that we are comparing ourselves to.

As I mentioned earlier, I know that David Lepofsky supported the idea of setting over 20 years, based on needs and resources, and I want to quote from him. He said, "We're very practical. We want business to make money on this, not lose money on this. We want to bring more business in their door including customers with disabilities and their friends and families."

That's what this legislation is about. This is about bringing Ontarians together, bringing business to the table, bringing community organizations to the table, bringing the able-bodied and those who are disabled to the table, for a combined Ontario, one where we can all prosper in years to come, one that will be accessible to all of us, one where all Ontarians will have access to services, access to jobs, access to the labour market and the marketplace. It is by putting in those realistic time frames that we believe we will be able to achieve our ultimate goal.

This legislation also contains time frames that the committees would be required to follow. Those committees will have responsibility for setting the all-important standards and reviewing those standards every five years. Setting deadlines as to the work of the committees will be the minister's responsibility, and she will require regular reports of them. They will have meaningful standards that they will put in place, real standards that would be achieved every five years on the all-important path to an accessible Ontario in 20 years.

I wanted to simply talk, in the last moments I have about the breadth of this legislation, why we will see such significant changes in those five-year intervals, and why 20 years from now Ontario will be a different place in which to live, work, learn and raise a family.

This bill could potentially cover more than 300,000 public and private organizations. We will need innovative enforcement and realistic time frames to include all of those organizations in cost-effective compliance, and that's what this bill provides.

In closing, I simply want to talk for a moment about small businesses and about the businesses that we have asked to participate with us in the development of these standards, the communities that we have asked to come together, to make sure that all of us in years to come will see the realities and will believe, as our government believes, that the key to Ontario's success is to strengthen our greatest competitive advantage, and that competitive advantage is our people.

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The proposed Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004, will help do just that. We will all benefit in the future from full accessibility, when people with disabilities have the best chance possible to contribute to our society, our community and our economy.

I'm pleased to support this legislation, and I look forward to what Ontario will be like in the next five, 10, 15 and 20 years to come.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I think when we look at this legislation, what we're looking at is carrying on a tradition. Over the years, we can see that there has been the recognition, as a society, to look at how we can make our communities more accessible, and I think what we're seeing here is the continuation of that kind of recognition.

Obviously we support—certainly I support—the notion of providing greater accessibility. I think the timelines are somewhat problematic, and I will have the opportunity later to make further comment on this. But I think when you look at the previous bill, Bill 125, and the fact that this government is taking years to move on its proposed legislation, as well as phasing out segments of this bill, it speaks to the complexity of the issue and to the comprehensive nature that has to be evolved.

The member spoke of the need to consult, and I think that's something that has to be appreciated. I would suggest that those consulted will also be looking for some kind of opportunity for compensation, for understanding the kind of financial obligations that this legislation will ultimately represent.

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make some comments on the debate provided by the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I think all of the comments that were made reflect the obvious positioning of the government and the minister in regard to the bill, and that's the way it should be. That's what their job is. But I think it's a little bit of a concern that there doesn't seem to be a willingness or a sense—I don't get the sense that the members opposite are prepared to really hear when there are positive suggestions coming from the opposition benches, whether that's the official opposition or the third party. I think it really is a bit arrogant to assume that you've touched every single base and covered off every single issue.

Later on, when I have an opportunity to debate this bill, I actually have some significant and quite specific recommendations. I have some general comments regarding the bill, definitely, but I also have the honour of having been provided with some very tangible recommendations from a former New Democratic Party member of provincial Parliament, Gary Malkowski. I'm quite honoured to be able to bring them into this forum and provide them, hopefully, as some positive, productive and constructive comments and criticisms.

Not all criticism is bad. In fact, people who are prepared to learn and grow and improve on ideas are those who understand that criticism can often be very positive and productive. That's what we're doing in relationship to this particular bill: We're providing positive criticism, positive opportunities for the government to make some changes so that the people in this province, particularly persons with disabilities, are going to be able to participate fully in every aspect of our community life.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured to stand up and speak in support of this bill. I just have a few comments before I start talking about it.

First, I want to thank my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for her eloquent and articulate description of Bill 118. I also want to go back to the member from Oak Ridges, who was talking about the difference between Bill 125 and Bill 118. There's a big difference, my friend, and I'll tell you what the difference is. We had in the galley the chair of the ODA committee, Mr Lepofsky. In an interview, he talked about Bill 125 and he said that bill was toothless. Also, he said it didn't apply to the private sector in any way, shape or form, nor was it enforced by the government back then. That's why, my honourable member from Oak Ridges, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration came up with Bill 118, in consultation with all the people in this province, in order to have a strong bill that has teeth, enforced by law. That's why we're debating it here today.

Also, I want to say to the member from Hamilton East, when she was talking about recommendations, that's why we're debating this bill here today: to listen to the recommendations of all sides of the House.

Also, I want to assure you and all the people of Ontario that this bill is going to committee. We are going to conduct more information. We're going to listen to all the people with disabilities in this province in order to ensure a strong bill that will benefit all the people across the province, especially people with disabilities. That's why we are here today. Again, we're going to assure all the people in this province, especially people with disabilities, that this bill is going to committee. We're going to listen to more people—

Mr Kormos: Across the province?

Mr Ramal: Across the province.

Mr Kormos: Are you going to travel?

Mr Ramal: Listen, my friend, I'm going to tell you something—

Mr Kormos: Are you going to travel?

Mr Ramal: Of course. Definitely.

Mr Klees: Well, what a surprise: We hear from a member of the government that they will listen. We hear from a member of the government that the reason we are here is so they can get input.

What is missing in this province, truly, is accessibility—accessibility to democracy. That's what's missing in this place, and the government is responsible for the barriers to democracy in this province.

I asked the table during debate about two weeks ago to do some research and to present to me the number of amendments this government has allowed since they took office more than a year ago on all pieces of legislation, through all debate, in all standing committees. I want to thank the table for their good work. In all that time, there were three amendments presented by the official opposition and the third party that were allowed by this government. Two of those amendments were simply the change of a date in the legislation.

So what I'm asking for is that as this government debates the accessibility bill, we give some thought to the true challenges to accessibility and the barriers that we have in this province. It's the barrier to true democracy.

This government now considers itself to have a monopoly on all of the ideas. Let this bill be evidence that they truly are prepared to listen, not only to the opposition or the third party, but to interested people in this province who want to bring forward their ideas. I look forward to seeing how many of them they will allow in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Ms Broten: I want to thank my colleagues from London, York North and Hamilton East, and I want to respond specifically to some of the comments that my colleague from Oak Ridges made.

The perspective I would bring is that we do our homework first. We have consulted and we have listened. Perhaps you missed that we consulted with more than a thousand people before this legislation came through. Many round tables were held with business, community specialists and activists.

The job for all of us here is to bring forward constructive comments to look at the legislation. I would suggest that, coming from a member whose own legislation has been viewed by the disabled community as not having any teeth, as not having enough measures, as not having strong enough standards—bring forward what changes you may, but please debate the legislation.

2010

We have consulted. We have brought forward legislation that will be put in place and will make significant changes in this province. We've brought forward all the sectors. I understand if there's not a comprehension of building consensus and bringing factions together. That's what the minister did in bringing this legislation forward. It's historic to have activists in the disability community working with business to come forward with legislation that everybody knows will change the face of this province in 20 years to come. This legislation will start making those changes immediately.

It's easy to set standards that are sometimes off into never-never land and into the future, but those individuals who understand what it is like to live and work in Ontario each and every day with a disability, like David Lepofsky, have said this legislation sets goals. It sets five-, 10- and 15-year goals and it will make this province completely accessible in 20 years. That's something to be proud of and that's something that I am proud to stand up in this Legislature and fight for.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has just confirmed for us that they have all the answers and that we need not debate the—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

The Chair recognizes the member for Oshawa.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the time to speak on Bill 118. I know many members having the opportunity to sit here tonight are very eager to speak on this and very interested in the details of this bill.

As opposition members all know, we share concerns, and our function is to point out some of the concerns

expressed by groups and organizations, and that is what my intention will be.

First of all, I should state that I will be supporting the legislation, as I believe most of our members will. I should also note that I am sharing my time with the member for York North.

Section 9 speaks about the standards in the affected ministries. Some further detail as to how the ministries are being affected—for example, as some may know, I'm the MNR critic, and in the MNR field there is a disabled moose hunt that takes place. So how will that ministry be affected in regard to things like that? There is; if you read the regulations, there is something on a disabled moose hunt and how those individuals—in the Ministry of Natural Resources, one of the areas the previous government worked on was that disabled individuals had to qualify every year in order to be classified as disabled. One of the areas that has not been moved forward was that there was going to be consistent and ongoing—for those individuals who wanted to have, for example, on their outdoor card a D designation, so they wouldn't have to be qualified by a doctor every year. That would certainly help out from that perspective within the Ministry of Natural Resources.

A couple of other things: section 15, reports by committees and the timelines, that a director may specify the timelines. Some concerns are, when are those timelines going to be established? Certainly, when you look at the legislation, the 2025 date and the 20-year timeline have brought a lot of concern for members here.

Another area would be part VI, the timelines and the appeals process. I have some concerns about the timelines. There's no specific date set for the appeals process. Could it be a year long? Could it be six months? Could it be 30 days? It doesn't specifically lay that out in the entire timelines. The concern might be that somebody is putting up a structure or a building and has now been shut down because of the new act that's coming forward. Those timelines may shut down that construction or that process unless some specific areas are clarified. Of course, I know the usual response is that that comes in regulations; however, the difficulty with that is that regulations are not put before the House, nor do the members have an opportunity for input on the regulations prior to them actually coming forward.

Some other areas: A lot of property managers and developers certainly have concerns. When new legislation comes out, it's always a concern. It's that unknown fear factor, the "what if" or the "analysis paralysis." What happens to the buildings that are currently out there? What are the timelines for retrofitting or upgrading or making sure that all those concerns are taken care of? Some of the developers and certainly property managers, individuals who look after this, should be looking at that aspect of it.

What about adding some form of transfer of ownership? When a transfer of ownership takes place, should not some guidelines and implementation of the policies be sped up or be made a part of that process? That's something the government could look at.

As well, it speaks under part III, clause 6(6)(c), about the different standards that might be utilized for different sized buildings or construction, whatever the case may be. Some of the concerns may be that you may be inspiring developers or businesses to build certain sizes, depending on the criteria that are brought forward. Now, we want to make sure that we as a society, as a whole, move forward with all development and that all are brought under a standard that won't negatively or possibly negatively impact the size of development, whether that be large or small, that developers may come forward with.

Committee membership needs to be very well balanced from all sides. We don't want developers to have a major say or individuals with disabilities to have a major say in what takes place, in that we need to come with a balance, and I would expect that the minister would certainly look at making sure that balance is there.

Also, the target dates are good. It's good to see they are in there.

Something else that should possibly be looked at is those groups, organizations and developers, whatever the case may be, having incentives to far exceed those dates that may be here. I know, for example, that in the Ministry of Transportation, when tenders are put out, if somebody exceeds that timeline for construction of a highway, for example, they receive a financial incentive to achieve that. There should possibly be incentives in this manner so that developers who are willing to come forward and step up to the plate that much faster or those who are willing to retrofit buildings that much quicker receive some form of concession, whether that's a tax concession or whatever the case may be. That would be a strong incentive for these individuals to move forward.

There are some other areas in the bill—I know that subsection 9(7) had some concerns in there as well. When you read clause 9(7)(b), it specifically states, "if required, revise the measures, policies, practices and requirements to be implemented on or before January 1, 2025, and the time frame for their implementation." Effectively, this clause could be used to delay any further implementation beyond the 2025 date. Certainly, when it says "the time frame for their implementation," when they're discussing that, that is a very specific aspect of this legislation that would cause me concern. Now, 2025 appears to be a time that the current government has picked as being fair and equitable to all those individuals with concerns on that. However, when you read sections such as 9(7)(b), there may be some more concerns brought forward as to further delays on this.

Some of the other areas: in section 14, "person or organization to whom an accessibility standard applies shall file...." Now, what we're going to see, or what I would expect to see, is a large number of groups and organizations such as, for example, the Metro East Anglers, a volunteer club and organization that runs a fish hatchery at Parkview golf course. Their concern may be, what is the impact of this legislation on their fish hatchery and accessibility? Certainly, when things such

as liability insurance came forward, there was a large flurry of groups and organizations moving forward to address that issue, and rightly so. They need to know how it's going to impact them, or are they impacted? These are the sorts of responses I'm hoping the government will be able to bring forward.

Also, through the committee process, we're certainly hopeful that the government will hear all groups and organizations to make sure they have a balanced perspective coming in.

When you look at subsection 14(3), the form that is going to be made available, how is that form going to be put together, who will have to apply, and how often is that form going to need to be utilized?

Some of the final areas, before I turn it over to my colleague, include the inspections without warrant. It takes place—for example, I know sometimes certain aspects of a community will find areas that they need to get into, and how are they going to deal with it? I know that there was a concern, for example, that conservation officers have access to facilities without warrant. Having a former deputy chief of police working in my office and my father being a chief of police in Thunder Bay. The ability for police to potentially assist in these areas, to access without warrant, may be cause for concern.

2020

One of the other areas that I would like to more or less close on is section 19(4): "An inspector shall not enter into a place or part of a place that is a dwelling without the consent of the occupant." Where is the proof and onus for occupancy? Being a man of the bar, you certainly would know that there is no form for proof of occupancy. So when someone doesn't want somebody to come in, they can say, "I'm not the occupant." You don't have the support of that. It's just a grey area, but our function is to point out these grey areas in the legislation that need to be addressed.

In closing, I would like to say that I intend to support the legislation. The time frame of 2025 is somewhat of concern. I hope that the government members have heard my concerns regarding some aspects of the bills, such as the appeal times, to make sure business can move forward in a timely manner, to make sure it is not delayed beyond something that is reasonable. I certainly hope, through the committee hearing process, that all these groups and organizations, from all aspects, will have the opportunity to give input on this. Once again, we will be supporting this legislation.

Mrs Munro: I'm pleased to rise this evening and offer a few comments on Bill 118. I looked back to the comments made by the minister when this bill was being introduced. I think it's a really good starting point for us to understand the context of this bill that we are debating here this evening.

At the time of introducing this, she said, "Through public education we can change attitudes, one of the biggest barriers people with disabilities face. We need to raise a generation of Ontarians who are acutely aware of accessibility, who are determined to create a truly accessible and barrier-free society."

I think it's a really good starting point because it offers us an opportunity to look back and see some of the history of the development of that kind of awareness. I'm sure there are many of you who remember when there were no curbs at corners that were formed to allow for wheelchair accessibility. There were no designated parking spaces. There were no elevators in buildings beyond multi-storied buildings. I think it's important to look at those examples, because I can recall when people talked about the need to change the curbs at corners, for instance, and the initiative that drove that. There were many people who looked at that and said, "I don't think that's necessary. I don't think there are very many people who would be able to benefit from that," and certainly the same thing with designated car spaces.

What we see, then, is that successfully in this province we have been able to raise that awareness and, at the same time as that awareness has been nurtured, developed and increased, we also see the increase in accessibility. The good news about increasing that accessibility, along with those beginning changes, is the understanding of the goal of creating a more accessible society. It comes when people who perhaps didn't understand the need for those things actually see people able to conduct themselves independently on the sidewalk and get across busy intersections by themselves, with motorized wheelchairs and things like that.

I think that when we look at this piece of legislation and the previous Bill 125, look at how successfully we have been able to increase public awareness. I understand there's a long way to go, and I'm not suggesting that this is over with. But I am suggesting it is that ongoing commitment that has allowed for a continued recognition of the need to make the changes.

At the time when the bill was introduced, we were reminded by the member from Burlington that the province has a proud reputation, that it was the first jurisdiction in North America to have a Human Rights Code and a human rights commission. We have kind of created the fertile ground; we have created the opportunities. It's a question, then, of this government providing that kind of resource to move things forward. It's important to understand that it is an ongoing process. It is an education process to a large extent, but it's also a process that means we have to listen to the kinds of recommendations that people are able to make.

I think that we have had some extremely good examples in the kind of work that has been done. I particularly want to draw attention to the work that has been done by the accessibility committees, because in ensuring that every municipality had an accessibility committee, it again brought closer to home the variety of issues around the problems of accessibility. I know that certainly in my community, the people involved in the accessibility committee who came from the need for greater accessibility found an avenue for an audience, an understanding and a recognition of their needs, which need to be met. I think that it's really important to be seeing this piece of legislation built on a foundation that has continued to grow over many years.

I think the comments we have from Patricia Copeland, a former member of the Barrie city council, who certainly saw first-hand the kind of work that an accessibility committee can do—she comments on the fact that, with the combination of the volunteers, who were, of course, men and women either living with a physical challenge or offering support to this community through their careers in a related field, they were able to work with city staff, who then participated. That, in turn, has the effect of simply creating a broader base of the community that understands the kinds of challenges that people face and the kinds of responses that we as a society have to make.

Having said that, however, when we look at some of the details about this bill, there are some issues that I think we need to raise, certainly the fact that those who have spoken on the government side have referred to the previous bill as toothless. I find it interesting that they're using that phrase because, at the same time, they are looking at a 21-year time frame. It seems to me, that's a long time for people to move in a direction—some people lose their teeth, actually, in that length of time.

2030

As this is obviously a generational exercise that this government is taking on, we need to look at the importance of the role of recommendations. Clearly, no one has a monopoly on good ideas. So if we're looking at a 21-year time frame that isn't a public relations exercise, then I think we have to be looking at how we are going to broaden the scope and be able to hear a greater number of voices. In my view, the fact that it's 21 years, the fact that it does appear to be a public relations exercise, the fact that we must have methods of broadening the scope of hearing more voices, the fact that we're looking at the repeal of Bill 125 over a period of many years—and while we support, in principle, the notions that are in this piece of legislation, we have to be very cognizant of the importance of keeping this government's feet to the fire—never mind its teeth—and make sure it continues the tradition of broadening the opportunities for people with disabilities in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: I listened carefully to the well-put comments of the member for York North and appreciate her participation in this debate, without the use of crib sheets prepared by some minion in the backrooms or with the advice of spin doctors, as is so often the case with government members when they stand up and read their scripted addresses, little of which, often, reflects their own true feelings and little of which is very comforting or assuring to their constituents. Ms Munro spoke on the basis of experience, on the basis of her own analysis, and fulfilled her responsibilities as a legislator here in that regard.

In about eight minutes' time, we're going to hear from Andrea Horwath, the member from Hamilton East. I want to encourage people to not abandon this over the next eight minutes, because Andrea Horwath is going to be taking the floor and making her 20-minute con-

tribution to this very important debate. So folks in Hamilton who want to hear from Andrea, whom they sent here—and we're grateful to you—will be able to do that in about eight minutes' time.

After I speak, I'm confident that one of the Liberal backbenchers is going to stand up and explain to you why we agreed that if there's a deferred vote—and I predict that somehow there will be a deferred vote. Nobody opposes the bill, but there are going to be Liberal members who will vote against the bill when it comes to a voice vote. Mark my words: There will be Liberal members who will vote against the bill so they can force a recorded vote. The trick is for the audience to listen carefully and find out which Liberal members are voting against this bill.

The other concern that's been expressed is, if there's a deferred vote—and the Liberals are going to create one—it's going to be on December 2. Ms Wynne is going to explain to you why. Various people want that explained because they're nervous that others are going to be worried that the government is stiffing them, because this government has such a bad reputation, has proven itself so unreliable and untrustworthy, that they want assurance as to why this vote is going to be deferred to December 2. You'll hear it soon from Ms Wynne.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I just want to say that I think anyone watching who can follow what's going on deserves an award.

I'll just follow up on what the member for Niagara Centre has said. By way of explanation, I understand there will be a vote later tonight, and in order to elicit a recorded vote—a division, as we call it in this House—five people are going to have to stand. There will be a “no” expressed. Five people will have to stand in order to force that division, or that vote. Then the vote, actually, is going to be deferred. I believe it will be deferred to December 2, which is International Day of Disabled Persons, and that actually has been requested by the community. So that's why later on tonight you will see that there will be a division, a vote, and it will be deferred. I want to thank the member for Niagara Centre for his attempt to elucidate the situation.

I just want to take issue with a couple of points that were made by the member for York North and the member for Oshawa—although, for the most part, measured comments.

I look forward to the comments from the member for Hamilton East, who is going to be speaking on behalf of Gary Malkowski, whom I had the pleasure of working with during the adult education review. I know that comments from people like Mr Malkowski and Mr Lepofsky are the kinds of comments we're going to want to hear as we move forward with this legislation.

The way this legislation was written was in consultation with people from the community, people with disabilities. So I really look forward to, in this House and also in the committee, comments from people who are living the reality that this bill is going to address. The fertile ground the member for York North spoke about is

the heritage of this province, and this bill builds on that broadening of opportunity for all people.

Mr Klees: I want to commend the member for York North for her insightful comments on this bill.

I want to now take the government at its word. They say they will be open to suggestions. We're talking about the importance of funding projects. I'd like to make this proposal: We have in this province a Trillium fund. There are some \$100 million-plus that come into that fund every year that are not allocated, but it's a responsibility of boards throughout the province to make specific allocations out of that fund to the community. Why don't we do this? Why don't we designate 2005 as accessibility year in this province and have every dollar out of that Trillium fund dedicated to accessibility projects within our communities? Why don't we do that? I would like the government of this province to take on that challenge.

Any place, any organization, whether that be the Legion within our community that needs to put in place accessibility mechanisms, whether it's a community centre, whether it's a church, could come forward and make their application for accessibility purposes. The year 2005, the year of accessibility, \$100 million-plus for accessibility projects: Let's see what the government does with that.

Ms Horwath: I just wanted to make a few comments myself on the debate presented by the members for Oshawa and York North. I have to say that I enjoyed very much the comments by both of these members. I think they've certainly taken the time to look through the bill. They've taken the time to determine what pieces they can support and what pieces they still have some concerns with.

It was made quite clear, and I think we'll see, as this bill progresses through committee and into third reading, that in fact the general sense—as Mrs Munro actually mentioned quite articulately—from the members of this House on all sides is that the bill is a positive step forward.

The issue becomes, then, what happens after second reading when the bill is into committee? Where is the commitment of the government to make sure that real, positive, true, well-thought-out and well-put amendments are going to be accepted by the government so that all voices are heard, all issues are raised and all concerns are appropriately dealt with so that we do end up with legislation that we can all be very proud of in the province of Ontario?

I think if we see that happening, it'll speak well to the comments we've heard by the government members tonight, that they are committed to accepting well-thought-out amendments, that they are committed to accepting the fact that members of the opposition and the third party actually have some positive comments to make. Unfortunately—

Mr Kormos: The NDP.

Ms Horwath: The member for Niagara Centre keeps reminding me I should be saying "NDP." It's not like

those days when we weren't allowed to say it in here, is it?

The bottom line is, I think New Democrats certainly do have a lot to say about this kind of legislation. We've often been on the cutting edge of progressive legislation like this, and we look forward to our comments during committee.

2040

The Acting Speaker: In response, the chair recognizes the member for York North.

Mrs Munro: Thank you to all of those who have made comments. Simply because of the nature of the comments, some of which seem to be more questions of stage direction than actual responses to the comments made by the member for Oshawa and myself, I would just echo some of the comments made by the member for Hamilton East, and that is simply the fact that as members of the opposition, we have had the opportunity, through debates such as this, to look at this bill, to look at what is the state in terms of the challenges of accessibility within the province.

The issue really is, what happens next? Obviously many of us believe that 20 years is too long. We have reservations about the ability to accept recommendations from a variety of sources, including those of the opposition, and we also have reservations with regard to the lack of commitment to specific areas of funding for steps that would be taken subsequent to passing this bill. So thank you very much to all of those who have commented.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate?

Ms Horwath: It certainly is my pleasure to finally get an opportunity to debate Bill 118, the act that's before us. It's An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the act for persons with disabilities. As you can well imagine, it's quite an extensive piece of work. It's had a lot of attention paid to it, but what I would like to talk to you about tonight is just some of the things that maybe have been missed, some things we might need to reconsider.

I'm going to talk a little bit about the fact that we all know very well that people living in Ontario, and particularly persons with disabilities living in Ontario, have waited one heck of a long time for legislation that is going to address their specific needs and concerns. Those concerns are as diverse as every single person who sits in this room is diverse from one another. So it's not a matter of any kind of cookie-cutter approach; it's a matter of really making the huge effort to understand, to become aware, to become sensitized and then to become committed to making the changes that are necessary, not only to enable but to encourage and in fact to ensure that persons with disabilities in Ontario are able to participate fully in all aspects of community life, and that means political, social, working, shopping, going to restaurants, being educated. Every single possible thing you could

imagine or think of that a person without a disability is able to do in our province, so should a person with a disability be able to have the same kind of opportunity.

The problem is that the bill itself keeps a lot of the details out. The bill is absent on specifics around incentives and timelines. It actually leaves a lot of discretion up to the minister and to the committee that will at some time be struck to hammer out the details.

I guess the thing I'm most concerned about is that we are very careful to put as much into the actual bill itself and not leave it all up to the regulations; to make sure that the bill is very specific when it comes to the kinds of activities, the kinds of real actions that the government is going to undertake. Otherwise, they'll get foisted off to either ministerial decisions or regulations, which are not part of what's happening here but in fact are happening in another forum that is not necessarily going to have the light of day for the public, and that's problematic. It's problematic because the government, as you heard earlier tonight, was, I have to say, bragging—is "bragging" a parliamentary word? I think it is—about how much consultation they've done, how much work they've done making sure they've spoken to every single person who might be concerned about this particular bill. I have to say that it's a bit—what's the right word?—presumptuous to assume that every concern of every person with a disability in the province of Ontario is necessarily going to be reflected in this bill.

Certainly, a process is an important thing to do, but the bottom line is when it comes to something that's actually written. So after consultation, you have a first draft. That's where we are now. We're at the first-draft stage. The issue becomes, if a lot of the specifics are left to regulations or left to some other committee to decide, then what happens is that you lose the opportunities that you had, in terms of indicating that in fact it was a full consultative process all the way through, because that consultation then stops at a certain point and the regulations are put into effect in a way that is not a consultative process. So there's a little bit of a disconnect there between what's being suggested is happening and what's actually going to happen, unless we can get a lot more of the specifics actually written into the bill as opposed to being just dealt with through regulation.

The time frame is an issue that is of concern, and not for everyone, but certainly there has been some criticism raised in regard to how long it's going to take for the full effect of this legislation to be felt in the province of Ontario. In fact, one of the people who is very involved in these issues is a woman from St Catharines. She sits on the mayor's advisory committee on accessibility for the city of St Catharines. She said, "A lot of us will be dead in 20 years—most of us will be dead. We can't wait 20 years. It's better than nothing, that's for sure. But to phase it in over 20 years—we need some real action now." That's a woman named Linda Crabtree, again, who is the co-chair of the mayor's advisory committee on accessibility for the city of St Catharines.

Another thing, actually, that's problematic—I've spoken about it a little already. I'm going to get into

some specific recommendations that, as I said before, Mr Gary Malkowski gave me to be able to have the honour of presenting them tonight during this debate. Really, the government is claiming that all of the standards that deal with such things as aisle widths in buildings and staff training and serving customers—in other words, all of the specifics around the hows, the really detailed stuff around how you train your staff and how you ensure that people are fulfilling the requirements of the legislation—all of these things are not actually laid out in the act. These are things that some committee in the future will establish and bring forward. Again, these standards are something that really should be laid out in the act, because you know what? When they're not, they're much easier to mess with in the future.

Again, those are some of the comments that I've heard. People are concerned that when things are not laid out in legislation, when they're left to be undertaken by these other processes—

Mr Kormos: "Trust us."

Ms Horwath: It does. It becomes an issue of, "Trust us. It'll be fine." You know what? The bottom line is, people in this province are quite aware that the promises that are written on paper like this are really not worth the paper they're written on, because the promises actually don't come to pass, nine times out of 10, in the province of Ontario. That's what we're experiencing with this government, anyway.

It's not even that. It's not even this current government and the promises that they are breaking blatantly, day in and day out. In fact, the other piece of the puzzle, the other problem is, what happens when the next government comes along? How do we make sure that the next government that comes along doesn't erode some of those standards, doesn't change them, doesn't fiddle with them, not in the light of day in this chamber but through the regulations process or through ministerial orders? The bottom line is, if it's not in the act, it's a lot easier to do that. Why? Because the public scrutiny of this forum is not being brought to bear in that kind of a process.

Really, to have the pieces outlined specifically right in the bill is what we need to see to make sure that the legislation that we end up with at the end of the day is going to be legislation that we continue to have over time. For a bill, quite frankly, when it becomes legislation, that's going to take a 20-odd-year time frame to be implemented completely, you can well imagine that if you have another government in four years or so turning around and changing parts of those standards and regulations. Then what happens? Your 20-year timeline is now a 30-year timeline or a 40-year timeline, or never.

2050

That's something we certainly can't risk when it comes to persons with disabilities in this province because we all know very well that their concerns, their issues, their needs, their rights, have just not been met by the province so far, and we can't see anything put into place that's going to be at risk of being eroded over the short term—or the long term, for that matter.

One of the other issues that isn't quite laid out in the act is the issue around enforcement tools for compliance. Quite frankly, what we need to know is exactly what is going to be in place when it comes to enforcement tools. The bill talks about the minister being able to set fines and to determine the process for the establishment of enforcement tools. Once again, it's another situation where, what if the minister is not inclined to set up the tools, what if the minister is not inclined to put real teeth behind a system of fines for people who are breaching the requirements of the new law?

Obviously these kinds of things we would all hope would be motherhood. We would all hope that every single citizen of this province, every single business in this province, every single employer in this province, every single educator, every single restaurant, every single provider of services or goods would be inclined to do what the law says. But we also know that there are going to be those—not unlike the Premier Fitness people who were going after consumers of fitness memberships in my city, the city of Hamilton. We had a discussion about that earlier today. Quite frankly, there are corporate bad apples. There are people who are going to try to do whatever they can to not come up with the kinds of accommodations that are necessary to ensure that persons living with disabilities are able to access services and goods. So you end up in a situation where leaving that to a ministerial whim is simply not strong enough, it's not good enough and it needs to be put right into the bill.

Some of the other issues that have already been outlined by others come from a list, my understanding is, more or less a wish list, if you will, of what the real obligations should be. Apparently in 1998, the Legislature adopted a resolution talking about what the principles should be, what any new Ontarians with Disabilities Act should embody in terms of principles. I have the original text with me, and I'm going to quote it and then do just a few things to talk about what that means.

"In the opinion of this House, since persons with disabilities in Ontario face systemic barriers in access to employment, services, goods, facilities and accommodation; and since all Ontarians will benefit from the removal of these barriers ... this House resolves that the Ontarians with Disabilities Act should embody the following principles...."

It goes on to lay out 11 or so principles. I have to say, there are several principles that are quite clearly indicated within the bill, and that's a positive thing; there's no doubt about it. It's why many of us around here are saying that it's likely this bill is going to pass at second reading and probably go on to bigger and better things in committee, let's hope, with amendments.

There are some places it falls short, quite frankly. It falls short in a number of the various principles. One of the first is the principle of doing all of this work in as short a time as possible.

I had already quoted the woman from St Catharines who is on the accessibility advisory committee for the mayor. Linda Crabtree quite clearly indicated that there

are many people who think the timelines are inappropriate.

I don't have very much time left and I have a lot more to say. What I am going to do, if you excuse me for a minute, is just grab the piece of paper that fell on the ground, because that's the piece of paper that I was given by Mr Malkowski. He has a lot of personal experience, but is also very well-respected in regard to advocacy work for persons with disabilities. I do have to say I'm quite honoured to have the opportunity to bring these things to your attention. So excuse me for one second. There we go.

Before I go on to that, though, I have to say that many members rose today and talked about some specific individuals in their communities. I have to tell you, coming from the community of Hamilton, representing the downtown area when I was on city council at the time, that was the area that had the largest numbers of units that were set aside for persons with disabilities. I have had the pleasure, the opportunity, to be educated, to be brought along in terms of my understanding of not only the kinds of disabilities that I think we all are faced with most often, which are the obvious, physically apparent disabilities, but also of many, many other people in the community that I used to represent and in fact the community that I represent right now in Hamilton East, large numbers of people with disabilities, whether they're injured workers, whether they are people who had disabilities from the time they were born, whether they were people who acquired disabilities through various kinds of accidents or exposures or different kinds of circumstances in their lives.

The variety of people and the number of people who have sincerely worked with me—whether it was on a municipal non-profit board when I was the chair of that, working on how to get truly accessible units in place, whether it was working with the city of Hamilton to put a system of urban Braille in place, which the city won awards for, to help people who are visually impaired to navigate our city's sidewalks in our downtown, whether it was working with our access and equity committee to talk about how to make our city hall physically more barrier-free, I had many, many opportunities to deal with these issues, and I really look forward to bringing that around to this particular discussion and debate.

Let me go through the quick list here. These are the suggestions that we hope to be raising once again during committee debate. How many are there? Maybe 10. We need to include the following in sections of Bill 118. Again, Mr Gary Malkowski suggests that we actually put this stuff right into the bill. Don't leave it to regs; don't leave it to any other process; don't leave it to a committee. Put it right in the bill.

One: "To train, expand and hire a significant number of pool of skilled accommodation service providers." That means people who are signers. That means people who are real-time captioners, deaf interpreters, interveners for people who are deaf-blind. That means personal care assistants, personal attendants. That's one thing.

The second thing: "To establish standards for quality assurance of accommodation service providers." So it's not good enough to just say that we're going to have these providers of services to assist with accessibility, but rather that these providers of services are specifically required to have qualifications and are required to have specific levels of training, expertise and professionalism.

Number three: "To require the House of leaders to review all private members' bills, resolutions and government bills to ensure accessibility issues have [been] addressed to include accommodation services for persons with disabilities. As well, it should include" the review of "all legislations and regulations with special attention for accessibility issues for persons with disabilities."

So, as we continue our work here, let's use the looking glass of accessibility to make sure that we're reviewing all of our legislation and all of the initiatives we're undertaking to ensure that we're not then perpetuating problems with creation of barriers. If we're not committed to doing that, then we're just committed to going in the wrong direction.

"To require" that we include "budgets for provisions for accommodations for persons with disabilities for MPPs, mayors, town/city councillors, constituency offices, Queen's Park offices, city and town councillors' constituency offices, municipal process and provincial parliamentary procedures, public hearings and consultation meetings." In other words, wherever we're doing the business of government, wherever we're doing the work that needs to be done to move our community forward in whatever way it is, that in every one of those locations, in every one of those forums, in every one of those places, we're making sure that we are making the commitment and building in the required budgets and the required commitments for persons with disabilities in Ontario.

"To review and amend to include accommodation provisions for persons with disabilities for election campaign activities, including offices and election debates as well as for municipal and provincial candidates with disabilities and volunteers with disabilities in Municipal Election Act and Ontario Election Act." So make sure that even our processes for getting people to these places of decision-making, our processes and our places that people who have physical and other types of disabilities are able to access not only as candidates but as volunteers.

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What else? "to include stiff penalty fees, tax incentives and tax breaks for excessive costs of accommodations for persons with disabilities for any size businesses and level of government." Again, this is the stick and the carrot approach. So it's not only a matter of making sure that fines are in place—fines are outlined for those who won't undertake the required accommodations—but also a matter of making sure that we find incentives, whether they be tax breaks or other kinds of incentives, to ensure that businesses, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, are able to accommodate people and make the changes that are necessary.

"To provide funding for low-budget, non-profit organizations and limited-budget municipalities to make services and programs accessible, as well as for accommodation provisions for employees with disabilities." So, again, it's another idea that speaks to the implementation. I know that other members have raised that issue as well, and I know that other members in this debate have talked about not just what it is that we need to do, but how it is that we're going to get there.

Certainly, Mr Malkowski, in his recommendations, is also recognizing that we need to put some serious thought to how we're going to not only encourage but actually fund, particularly the non-profit sector, particularly smaller types of organizations that just don't have it in their budget lines to be able to find the money to make the accommodations that are necessary.

I have to say that I'm a bit disappointed. During my little speech here, my friend from Niagara Centre, Mr Kormos, a great New Democrat and long-time member of this Legislature, wasn't interested. He said to me, "People are going to turn the channel if you're not interesting." He turned the channel and left his seat, but you know what? I know that he listened to every word that I had to say, because he's an excellent supporter and a great New Democrat.

Those are my comments.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Berardinetti: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Hamilton East, and I want to assure her, I was paying attention to what she had to say.

I want to go back to the fact that this legislation in front of us today really provides for regulations, which are mechanisms to enforce the new act. This is something that the previous government, the Tory government, did not undertake. I hope that the member from Oak Ridges addresses this when he speaks in his two minutes, because I want to know the answer to why, when they were in government and passed legislation in 2001, no regulations were put into place. The act was put into force, but no regulations.

Today, we bring forward an act which has real teeth, which has regulations, which allows inspectors or directors to go into businesses and other buildings in order to inspect and, if necessary, go forward and issue an order so that that business will comply. I tell the member from Oak Ridges, when he was in government as a cabinet minister, that he had a choice to make at that time, and he could have said around that cabinet table, "Let's put in regulations. Let's give our 2001 legislation some teeth."

It reminds me a little bit of what happened in 1984, when Brian Mulroney said to John Turner, "Sir, you have a choice; you have an option." Mr Turner did not take that option. I wonder why the member from Oak Ridges did not take the proper option at that time and did not do what was right.

This legislation has teeth. It's another promise fulfilled. I know he's going to say, "Another broken promise," but this is another promise fulfilled, such as freezing auto rates, increasing minimum wage, cancelling

the private tax credit, cancelling corporate tax breaks, more money in health care, more money in education, introducing greenbelt legislation, freezing MPP salaries, two cents a litre provided to municipalities, and the list goes on and on.

I hope that in the future I get more opportunities to let the member from Oak Ridges know, and the rest of the Tory party know, that we fulfilled more promises in our first year than they did in eight and a half years.

Mr Klees: What an absolute joke. There isn't a person in Ontario who doesn't know that Premier McGuinty and the entire group of Liberals sitting behind him have broken more promises—they have zero credibility. Not one person in this province doesn't know that Mr Pinocchio, who presents himself as Premier, has undermined the credibility of politicians not only in this province but right across the country.

With regard to what we're supposed to be doing here, I want to compliment the member from Hamilton East for a very informed debate. Obviously, the member has taken the time to understand this legislation. She has challenged the government. It's interesting that the Liberal member took the time to talk about the member from Oak Ridges rather than respond to the very reasoned debate and the challenges that the member from Hamilton East put to him and put to the government to talk about where the implementation mechanisms are, to talk about where the funding is, to talk about what all of the practical recommendations are that Mr Malkowski put forward.

No. This government is afraid to deal with those issues. They're very good at deflecting any criticism. But the people of this province know, because they're watching and they know that the smoke and mirrors being presented by this government in this bill is precisely that. It's one more photo op; it's one more bumper-sticker political attempt on the part of this government. It's unfortunate.

I credit the member from Hamilton East with very reasoned debate and recommendations. Let's see if in fact the government—

The Acting Speaker: Frank, enough.

The Chair recognizes the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Kormos: The breathless member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): There we go; not bad. I ran up the stairs and made it within a minute and 30 seconds.

I was in my office watching this particular debate and I must say that I was terribly impressed with the member from Hamilton East.

Ms Horwath: Did you turn the channel?

Mr Bisson: I didn't even turn the channel, can you believe. And I am breathless. I thought I could run up those stairs and I could do it easily.

I thought a couple points needed to be made. First of all, I thought there was a pretty good presentation in regard to saying, "Yes, we need to move forward. Yes,

this is a step in the right direction." And yes, I am breathless—unbelievable. Boy, do we get out of shape when we get older.

Anyway, there is a responsibility on the part of all members, not just opposition, to try to find ways to strengthen this act. Because she's right: There are a number of parts in this particular bill that quite frankly are not going to do the disabled community a lot of good for a long time. Unless the government is prepared to accelerate some of those issues and find ways to lever those things from happening, it's not going to do the disabled community a lot of good real quick.

The other issue is to put the real meat and potatoes to the bill. I think that's a point that needs to be made in this debate. I just had Gary Malkowski in my office for about the last hour talking to me about all those issues.

Mr Kormos: So you weren't watching Andrea Horwath.

Mr Bisson: Gary was there. I was watching her for the last 20 minutes.

But the point I make is that the point Mr Malkowski and others have made is that, yes, this is a step in the right direction—they give the government some credit for doing something that's right—but where is the meat? That's what they're basically saying. They're saying, "There's nothing wrong with taking a good step forward, but you need to make sure that you put in place the real mechanisms and the funding necessary to make sure that these kinds of changes are meaningful to the disabled community."

For government members to get up and say that if the members of the opposition get up and try to strengthen the bill, that's somehow not a good thing, I think is a disservice to the disabled community.

Hon Mr Caplan: It's a pleasure to comment on the speech of the member from Hamilton East. I think everybody in this chamber understands, and the people outside who are watching understand, the nature of debate, the way it goes on in the Legislature. The government proposes legislation. They propose direction. The job of the opposition is to talk about the flaws, about how things can be strengthened, what should be done, and urge actions to happen faster. I've been on the opposition side and I've been on the government side, as have many members.

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One of the things I like to do is read some of the old Hansard debates. In fact, I've got some interesting ones here that deal with Ontarians with disabilities acts: a resolution brought by Marion Boyd back in 1998; a resolution brought by Mr Duncan, the member for Windsor-St Clair, also in 1998; a resolution by Steve Peters, the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, brought in 1999. They're generally all around this time of year, as a matter of fact. It has a great deal to do with the fact that this is the time we generally mark the international day where we recognize persons with disabilities and we want to bring in meaningful actions.

This act, the Ontarians with disabilities act, moves the yardstick further than anything that has ever happened in this province, and that's something to celebrate. I think we all take the comments the members have made within that light.

I do want to reserve one last comment for the member for Oak Ridges, who made several comments which I think, when he reflects on them, will find that he regrets some of them because they're simply wrong. I would say to the member, if you don't find anything supportable in this bill, why would you support it? Have the courage of your convictions and vote against it. But if you think there is something worthwhile in the bill, you should stand in your place and say so.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: For the deputy House leader to talk about convictions when it's the Speaker of this assembly who is ordering people arrested—

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton East in response.

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to respond to the comments of the members for Scarborough Southwest, Oak Ridges, Timmins-James Bay and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and deputy House leader.

I have to say that I really believe there are extremely important pieces to this legislation. I look forward to seeing it pass through second reading and going to committee. I look forward to opening the doors of this Legislature, in whatever way possible, and welcoming in next week people who are activists within the community of persons with disabilities, persons with disabilities themselves and other people who are just going to be really interested to see what we're doing here.

It's appropriate that we came to an agreement around making sure they had a lot of advance notice about the fact that we were going to be having second reading of this bill finish at a particular time. I think we all worked really hard to accommodate them, to make it accessible for them to come in and hear what it is we're doing, to come in and see what it is we're doing, to come in and experience what it is we're doing.

I'm certainly hoping that next week the government is arranging to have a fully accessible opportunity here in the House, that all of the various kinds of interpreters we're going to need are going to be here, so that the people who are coming, the advocates and the activists from the community, are able to hear, see, learn, understand and deal with what we're going to be bringing forward. Quite frankly, if we don't make that an accessible forum next week, then really, we're not doing a very good service to the people we're purporting to be affecting in positive ways with this bill.

So I look forward to seeing all of the interpreters here in the Legislature. I'm looking forward to making sure that every single person who comes to hear this, to see this, to understand this vote next week is going to be welcomed in ways that fit their needs here in this Legislature. I trust that's going to happen and I look forward to that next week.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to participate in the debate? Reply to the parliamentary assistant? No.

The minister has moved second reading of Bill 118. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I've heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it is deferred to December 2 in accordance with the agreement made earlier tonight.

Orders of the day?

Hon Mr Caplan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Adjournment of the House has been moved and carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm Monday.

The House adjourned at 2115.

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Monday 29 November 2004

Lundi 29 novembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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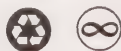
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MICHAEL SIYDOCK

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

Mike Siydock served for many years as a warden with the Ministry of Natural Resources. During that time, his dream was to join his brother Kevin as a member of the Ontario Provincial Police. Seven years ago, his dream was realized. This past Friday evening, while responding to a motor vehicle accident, Mike collapsed at the scene. He was pronounced dead at the Milton general hospital. Mike Siydock was 49.

Mike grew up in Whitney, Ontario. He was an avid sportsman who loved to hunt and fish, and made many return trips to the area with his boys to enjoy this passion.

I first got to know Mike during minor hockey days, and through the years the Siydock boys and the Yakabuski boys clashed on the ice on many occasions. There were competitive confrontations on the ice, but only on the ice. I also worked with Mike in Algonquin Park in the summer of 1976. Mike had more experience than I did and was always willing to help the new kids.

Mike was married to Elizabeth Murray, of Barry's Bay. Liz and I were one year apart in school. Both Mike's and Liz's families have deep roots in the Madawaska valley; they are well-known and respected. Along with Liz, Mike leaves behind their three children, Donald, Stephen and Laura; his father, Andrew; and 10 brothers and sisters. He will be missed by them and by countless others.

WIFE ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): November is Wife Assault Prevention Month, and as part of the effort to respond to this very serious situation, women's shelters around the province are lobbying the McGuinty government to provide funding to add 60% more beds to the shelter system.

In Sudbury the need for more shelter beds is critical. The executive director of our YWCA reported last week that Genevra House, a 32-bed shelter for women and children, is completely full. There is zero vacancy. In the last month, four mothers and their children were transferred out of the community because no beds were avail-

able for them. Women and children have been placed in shelters in Sturgeon Falls, North Bay and as far away as Orillia and Barrie. Women making the difficult decision to flee from an abusive partner should not have to go to a shelter four hours away from home in order to be safe. It is overwhelming enough to flee, perhaps without money or any means to support your children; imagine the added stress when you have to flee the community too and leave behind any support of friends and family who might be needed to help you and your children survive this trauma.

This is a situation which can't be allowed to continue. We need more shelter beds, not only in Sudbury but throughout the province. We need a substantial increase in social assistance rates to make up for the 34% loss in income that came with the 22% cut and eight-year freeze of rates under the Conservatives. We need more affordable housing so women and children don't have to choose between a violent home and no home at all. And we need these changes now, so women and children traumatized by violence can seek and obtain refuge and have the resources they need to put new lives together again.

NATIONAL OSTEOPOROSIS MONTH

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise today to recognize that November has been National Osteoporosis Month. Some 1.4 million Canadians suffer from osteoporosis. One in four women and one in eight men over the age of 50 has osteoporosis, but the disease can strike at any age. Maybe osteoporosis is not the disease we think about the most, but it's one that affects many of us, and together we can reduce both its prevalence and its impact.

As we mark National Osteoporosis Month this year, there is reason for optimism. Significant progress is being made toward the adoption of an osteoporosis strategy. According to Dr Earl Bogoch of St Michael's Hospital, a coordinated and targeted strategy has the potential to reduce fractures related to osteoporosis by 50% to 60%.

The Osteoporosis Society of Canada was formed in 1982 as the first national charitable organization dedicated to helping people living with osteoporosis in the world. With headquarters located in my riding of Don Valley West, the Osteoporosis society works with volunteers, the medical community, health care organizations and government to promote high-quality services, research and education for people affected by osteoporosis.

I want to take this opportunity to invite all members of the Legislature to join me in recognizing the hard work of Karen Ormerod and her team at the Osteoporosis Society of Canada and the difference they make in the lives of people who live with osteoporosis every day.

MICHAEL SIYDOCK

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Along the lines of Mr Yakabuski, I have a statement on the death of a constable on the weekend.

As critic for community safety and correctional services, it is with great sorrow that I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Provincial Constable Michael John Siydock, of the Port Credit detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police.

On the night of Friday, November 26, while on duty investigating a motor vehicle collision near Milton, Constable Siydock collapsed. He was later pronounced deceased due to natural causes at Milton general hospital. Constable Siydock was only 49 years of age. He leaves behind his wife, Elizabeth, and his children, Donald, Stephen and Laura.

While his personal family grieves his loss, so does his OPP family. Members of the OPP are strongly committed to each other, to exemplary service and to making this province a safer place for all. While they may not see or speak to each other every single day, ties develop between officers that bind the entire OPP family together. In fact, I spoke during the weekend to OPP Commissioner Gwen Boniface. Hearing her grief made me realize just how profoundly the constable's death has affected the OPP as an organization. There is a quote on the OPPA Web site that reads as follows:

Remember our fallen members and their memory,
if we forget, who but their family will remember,
after all, we are all family.

On behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, John Tory, I offer condolences to the Siydock family and to the OPP family. May Constable Siydock rest in peace, as he so rightfully deserves, and may his family treasure his many memories.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): On the evening of November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Honourable Sandra Pupatello travelled to Kincardine to speak, and she carried the message that this government is serious about ending the deadly cycle of violence against women.

She praised the Women's House of Bruce County for its work, for offering a shelter to women and children who are escaping from domestic violence. Both the Women's House of Bruce County and the Women's Shelter of Huron have benefited from increased funding from this government.

The Honourable Sandra Pupatello has announced an action plan to fight domestic violence, including additional funding to create second-stage housing, investing in a public education and awareness campaign, improved training for people working in the criminal justice system to better assess risk and abusive situations, and province-wide consultations with experts and front-line workers. November is Wife Assault Prevention Month, and it marks the government's commitment to ending violence.

1340

DOCTORS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): The hallmark of Health Minister George Smitherman has been the bully approach. This has certainly been the case with respect to Ontario's public hospitals. But Premier, the bully is back. The bully is now bullying our doctors.

Let's look at what Christina Blizzard said in the Saturday Sun: "I don't know if it's bald-faced arrogance or sheer stupidity that prompted Premier Dalton McGuinty and his Health Minister George Smitherman to declare war on the province's 20,000 doctors yesterday."

She then quotes Dr John Rapin, who later said, after the stunt that the health minister and Premier pulled, that he and Ontario's physicians had been "shanghaied" by the government: "Some of you"—the news media—"got this release before I did."

Let's look at the bottom line, according to the Sun and Christina Blizzard. The bottom line is, "It is outrageous—and very dangerous—for McGuinty to get involved in such a ham-fisted attempt to browbeat the doctors.... Now it's not just his minister who is wearing this foolish move. McGuinty himself has egg all over his face."

What have we heard from Dr John Rapin and the OMA? Just today, in a recently released letter, he says, "It is unacceptable that a government who promised to work with doctors would fail to even return their phone calls about an important issue."

The OMA is asking to get an explanation of this media stunt, of this media press release. They said that the government of Dalton McGuinty has "failed to take the time to consult directly" with Ontario's physicians.

Shame on this minister, and double shame on Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise today in recognition of two Halton police services groups that are committed to keeping our communities strong and safe. The Elder Abuse Prevention Committee provides advice, training and information forums for organizations that deal specifically with seniors. The Two District Diversity Team has been doing fine work in promoting training and diversity issues within a variety of organizations.

On November 3, I had the honour of presenting the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee and the Two District

Diversity Team of Halton Regional Police Services with the 2004 Award of Excellence for Fighting Crime.

I would also like to take this time to mention two of my fellow members, without whom these awards would not exist. David Zimmer and Liz Sandals have been doing amazing work as co-chairs of the Ontario Crime Control Commission.

Please join me in applauding the vigilance of the Elder Abuse Prevention Committee and the Two District Diversity Team of Halton Regional Police Services, and all their colleagues, for the work they do in building an Ontario and a Halton region that is safe for all citizens.

RENEWABLE FUELS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): The McGuinty government is putting forward a plan that will require that all gasoline sold in Ontario contain an average of 5% ethanol by 2007. As many of you know, ethanol is a cleaner-burning fuel, so this means cleaner air for all Ontarians.

As I'm sure you know, Mr Speaker, ethanol is made primarily from corn, meaning this initiative will be a major boost for rural farming communities all across Ontario. Small agricultural communities like mine in Chatham-Kent-Essex or communities in Brant, Guelph or Cornwall—agricultural communities all across Ontario—will benefit from increased demand for their products.

It also means that ethanol producers can now move forward on new investments, investments in capital and jobs, investments that will help make our domestic ethanol industry the springboard for a larger bio-based economy that will bring new opportunities to Ontario.

To that end, the McGuinty government is also working to develop a parallel strategy to boost the domestic production and use of biodiesel, something that will help make Ontario a leader in the emerging bioeconomy. People in farming communities will see real benefits. It's a win for farmers, a win for rural Ontario and a win for the environment. This is not only a boost for Ontario in the rural communities; it is a boost for all Ontarians, who will reap the rewards of cleaner air and improved health.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I thought I'd share another one of today's headlines with the House: "Ontario to Overtake Michigan as Auto Kingpin."

Ontario's auto industry represents the largest manufacturing sector in the province. The sector directly employs more than 140,000 people and generates another 191,000 jobs in spinoff activities.

This government understands how important the auto industry is to the Ontario economy. That's why we announced the Ontario automotive investment strategy, which over the next five years will invest in leading-edge auto manufacturing projects that are worth more than \$300 million in investment or that create or retain more than 300 jobs. Recently, we invested \$100 million when Ford celebrated its 100th anniversary in Ontario and

announced \$1 billion for a flexible manufacturing facility in Oakville.

Investments in the auto industry mean investments in my community, in my riding of Essex. Instead of turning our backs on the automotive industry like the previous government did, we're celebrating it.

Just listen to what Buzz Hargrove had to say at the Ford announcement this past year: "I first have to compliment Dalton McGuinty, because it was with his election that we got rid of the naysayers that said this industry was a smokestack industry, was dying, that the government shouldn't put money in." He complimented Joe Cordiano, he complimented the ministry and he said he was never so happy in his life to see the tail end of Jim Flaherty. That's the word from Buzz Hargrove.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): In the members' west gallery we have a former member from Halton Centre of the 36th Parliament, Mr Terence Young. Let's welcome him here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO GENERATION CONTRACT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. Last week I raised an issue with your energy minister dealing with the very rich contract awarded to AIM PowerGen Corp, a company headed by the Ontario president of the Liberal Party of Canada.

The bid requirements outlined in your RFP forbid anyone who is bidding to have any contact with any provincial official before and during the bid process. Can you assure the House that, in the case of this \$475-million contract awarded to a prominent Liberal, the no-contact requirement was adhered to?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I believe the Minister of Energy had an opportunity to speak to this last week, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to address it as well.

The process for this RFP was open and tendered. The government was not involved in selecting the successful bidders. The minister was not aware of any of the successful proponents until a few days before the announcement itself was made. An independent fairness commissioner was contracted to oversee the entire process and ensure that all proponents and interested parties were treated equally and fairly throughout the process.

Mr Runciman: Once again the Premier clearly avoided the questions dealing with adherence to bid requirements. We're talking about a contract that provided a company headed by a prominent Liberal with a guaranteed 20-year, \$66,000-a-day contract. This is a very lucrative deal, and the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario have a right to know if this contract was awarded appropriately.

Today I received information indicating that Mr Mike Crawley, the president of AIM PowerGen, sent an e-mail in the midst of the bid process to various parties encouraging their attendance at the energy minister's fundraiser at \$5,000 a pop. Premier, I'm sending copies of this material over to you and asking that you have an independent third party review the contract award process to ensure that it was absolutely above-board.

1350

Hon Mr McGuinty: To repeat, the entire process was overseen by an independent fairness commissioner. I'll quote from his report. It stated in part, "We detected no bias either for or against any particular proponent in the application of the" evaluation "criteria. "Those evaluation criteria that were applied were applied objectively based on a criteria published in the RFP." I think the fairness commissioner has addressed this.

Mr Runciman: In fairness to the fairness commissioner, he would be unaware of these political contacts; he would be unaware of Mr Crawley's e-mail. To try to lay this all on the fairness commissioner is totally inappropriate.

Premier, the contract your government signed with Mr Crawley is worth \$24 million a year, or \$66,000 a day, each and every day, guaranteed, for 20 years. A contract of this magnitude must be above-board.

Your own RFP was clear in stating that no bidder may have any contact with decision-makers before or during the RFP process. The RFP was issued on June 24 and it closed on August 25 of this year. Mr Crawley, the winner of this contract, sent an e-mail out on July 27 for an August 23 event. You won't guarantee that the RFP guidelines were followed. Premier, will you halt this contract immediately and refer it to the Integrity Commissioner to ensure that it is completely above-board? Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member opposite knows full well that he has the option, if he wants to—if he thinks there is some legitimacy connected with his concern, then what he can do is refer this to the Integrity Commissioner himself. Rather, he chooses to bring this here and make these kinds of spurious allegations on a rather regular basis.

The fairness commissioner oversaw this matter. Again, he addressed it very specifically. He said, and I quote once more, "We detected no bias either for or against any particular proponent in the application of the" evaluation "criteria. Those evaluation criteria that were applied were applied objectively based on the criteria published in the RFP."

I believe that ends the matter. If the member opposite wants to keep this alive, if he thinks there's some legitimacy, then I encourage him and invite him to speak to the Integrity Commissioner.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Premier. It concerns hospital funding in eastern Ontario. Premier, your own Ministry of Public Infra-

structure and Renewal Web site says that it "manages infrastructure planning to achieve maximum leverage for taxpayer dollars." Taxpayers in Campbellford, Ontario, and indeed throughout Northumberland county were shocked and outraged to see your parliamentary assistant for this ministry trotting around the county saying that the riding of Northumberland had too many hospitals and that the province couldn't afford to run them. Premier, your parliamentary assistant is basically threatening hospital closures.

Residents of Northumberland county want you, their Premier, to personally stand in your place and say that this idea is misguided. Will you stand in your place and defend the Campbellford Memorial Hospital?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the Minister of Health would like to address this.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In a fashion that seeks not to confirm the honourable member's storyline, because that hasn't always served us well in the past, I can stand in this House and give complete assurance to the people of Northumberland, and in fact the people of Ontario, that we have no plan to close hospitals. In fact, I'm on the record as very clearly saying—from one of the earliest questions I ever had in this House, related to the Four Counties hospital in Newbury—that every hospital in Ontario is cherished and that each one of them has a very special and particular role to play, and that it's our government's complete intention to build on their capacities and enhance the role they play in each and every one of these important communities.

Mr Baird: I want to redirect this question back to the Premier. Premier, it's not rich enough that your second-highest-ranking elected official dealing with public infrastructure in the province is threatening to close hospitals in Northumberland; in fact, this individual is the member of provincial Parliament for Northumberland. That's the riding that Campbellford Memorial Hospital calls home.

Volunteers in the community are angry and frustrated. Your parliamentary assistant's suggestion that the hospital might have to close is hurting patient care today. You see, it's hard to fundraise for the hospital's capital campaign when the local MPP is threatening to close it. It's hard to attract new doctors and nurses when the local MPP is musing publicly about shutting down the hospital.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr Baird: Their local MPP won't stand up for their hospital. Taxpayers, patients and health care workers in Campbellford and throughout Northumberland county want you to stand in your place and say that this idea is not going to happen, that it will not happen as long as you're in the Premier's chair. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think the important part of history that people need to be reminded of in the House today is that if there is a party in this Legislature that has a history of closing hospitals in Northumberland, it's that party. That party closed the Port Hope hospital during

their days in office. This is the party that, while in office, took the knife and cut health care services in Northumberland. It's not the plan of our party.

Since coming to office, we have been involved in an unprecedented investment in community care and almost \$1 billion in new operating funds for Ontario's hospitals. Campbellford, like the other 153 distinct hospital corporations in the province of Ontario, is one of the proud foundations of a very good health care system.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is also to the Premier. This past weekend, I was in Peterborough, and I was literally shocked when I picked up the local press that said the Peterborough Regional Health Centre was "in dire straits." Minister, this means less service and more cost to that community.

I went on to read the article in some detail. This was said by the CEO of the hospital: "This is a challenging time, a stressful time." Clearly, in the community of Ontario, Peterborough is just one of many that are hurting from your cuts and brutal action by your Minister of Health. Minister, you've not only imposed a health tax of \$2.4 billion, but people are simply paying more and getting less. It isn't just the Peterborough hospital I'm speaking of. I believe the arguments you have going on in health care are not helpful.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, it's more tax, less service. What are you going to do to help the rural hospitals in Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Let's be clear in a fashion that the honourable member couldn't be in his question.

There is a party in this Legislature, and it's the governing party, that's investing this year \$700 million more in Ontario hospitals than they proposed in their Magna budget for the same fiscal year. There is a party in this Legislature, and it is the Liberal Party, that stands in contrast to those two parties, which, during their days in government, cut the budgets of Ontario hospitals—in your case, over two years by \$600 million. It is only the magical math of the honourable member that can turn a \$469.5-million investment in hospitals into a cut. The reality of the circumstances are very clear. The cuts that took place under their regime totalled nearly \$600 million over two fiscal years.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Just a year and a half ago you used to criticize the former Conservative government for creating conflict everywhere, for dividing society and attacking anyone who disagreed with their direction.

On Friday, your health minister tried a cute surprise trick with the doctors, the physicians of Ontario. In response, the president of the Ontario Medical Association, Dr Rapin, said he was upset with the way the revamped offer was foisted upon the doctors. He said, "I feel disappointed and frustrated, and there's some anger

around as well, that we've been somewhat shanghaied rather than dealt with openly by government."

Premier, why is your Minister of Health now employing the same kinds of tactics that you used to criticize under the former Conservative government?

1400

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me take the opportunity once again to commend our Minister of Health, who has been relentless, respectful of Ontario's doctors and resolved to move ahead with the fundamental transformation that ensures Ontario patients have better access to family care and we put our health care system on a more sustainable footing. I want to commend him for taking on that responsibility.

Just so we know how we got here, 14 months into our mandate, this minister devoted nine entire months to negotiating with the Ontario Medical Association. That consisted of over 120 meetings. We set up four side tables, which themselves also involved some 44 meetings. The Ontario Medical Association negotiating team endorsed this agreement unanimously. That gives you an idea of how hard we worked with the Ontario Medical Association, with Ontario's doctors' representatives, to make sure that we got this right. I think that demonstrates tremendous respect for those people who work day in and day out on behalf of Ontario patients—our doctors.

Mr Hampton: Clearly, Premier, somewhere there must be something wrong with your strategy, because Dr Rapin said that he felt "somewhat shanghaied rather than dealt with openly by a government that had committed to work with stakeholders to renew health care."

He also said, and I quote the Toronto Star, that the surprise bargaining tactic "infuriated senior doctors ... who were summoned to what they thought was an 8:00 am informal chat ... aimed at kick-starting a new round of negotiations." Dr Rapin referred to your leaking of torqued and misleading polling information that vilified doctors as "cheap politics."

Premier, why is your Minister of Health engaging in the kind of cheap politics that you were so critical of the former Conservative government for?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Let me tell you that we are very proud of this plan, and we look forward to moving ahead with it. Let me tell you about some parts of it.

Our plan improves access to medical services by rewarding—not penalizing, but by rewarding—doctors, by providing them with specific incentives and supports. For example, it provides significant rewards and incentives for doctors working in underserved northern and rural communities. It rewards and supports doctors who work in teams with fellow doctors as well as nurse practitioners and pharmacists, giving patients better access to care around the clock. It pays doctors to spend more time with senior citizens. It provides incentives and supports to reduce wait times for key medical services like hips and knees, cardiac, cancer, MRIs, CTs and the like.

I believe that it is transformative and it is essential. But I'm also pleased that more and more people are

coming forward and saying, "Yes, we want to go ahead with this agreement."

I thought that the member opposite would want to support Roy Romanow, and I look forward to quoting from him very shortly.

Mr Hampton: Premier, maybe it has gotten past you, but everyone in Canada believes in primary care reform. It's the new motherhood and apple pie of health policy. Even Mike Harris said that there had to be primary care reform. That's not the issue. The issue is the conduct of your health minister, who only seems to know one mode of operation: attack, attack and attack.

This is what the physicians said as a result of your manoeuvre on the weekend. Dr Rapin felt that you tricked him, that instead of a discussion, they were, as I say, handed the media reports at the same time that you were handing the press releases and your documents to the media. He said that this kind of heavy-handed tactic could alienate physicians and might hinder plans to change the way family medicine is practised in Ontario.

Premier, isn't it time to stop a Minister of Health who only seems to know one mode of operation: attack, attack, attack? Isn't it time to pay more attention to preserving our health care system?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I think it's time for us to move forward with the transformation of health care in the province of Ontario, and that's what we're doing.

It's hard to figure out, from one day to the next, where the leader of the NDP stands on these issues and where his party stands on these issues. Originally, when this agreement was made public, he said, "Most people would find it hard to swallow an 11% increase, but a 25% increase, a 35% increase?" Apparently, now he's very much on side with the doctors who want to come back and renegotiate the deal.

I want to quote from Roy Romanow, who I think has a tremendous amount of credibility when it comes to health care in this country. This is his characterization of our approach and the arrangement—our plan—that we want to have with Ontario doctors: "It is a fundamental transformational change, and it is something that all the evidence in my report indicates should be implemented," he said. "I think the government is on the right track."

"I believe that the government of Ontario has the support of the public. It's the right thing to do. Hopefully, the doctors will still come round to an agreement. But if not, the Premier, I think, must act."

They've been talking about action for a long time. We're actually acting.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to quote another self-described expert in health care who spoke during an election: "It's time to invest in greater resources ... and stop the ... privatization of health care."

"Gimmicks and name-calling and personal attacks won't get the job done."

But what we've had is a Minister of Health who, when the physicians disagree with him, tries cheap politics, releasing press releases that vilify doctors. When the hospital association disagrees with him, he threatens them. When the cleaners, the lowest-paid workers in the hospital system, disagree with him, he threatens them.

Premier, don't you think it's time to get rid of the personal attacks, the name-calling and the cheap gimmicks that your Minister of Health seems addicted to engaging in?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's interesting to get this question from a guy who, during the course of the campaign, tried to nail Jell-O to a wall. Apparently, he has no affinity for gimmicks whatsoever.

Interjections.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Apparently, I've struck a nerve.

The member opposite may not understand this, but moving ahead with change—change that's very important to the people of Ontario—is not an easy thing to do. That's why, together, this government invested some nine months of negotiations, 120 meetings, with Ontario's doctors. It went on at considerable length. I'm proud to say that at the end of the day, we received the unanimous endorsement of the Ontario Medical Association. In fact, I have a copy of the last page of the agreement. It says, "The undersigned representatives of the parties hereby agree to unanimously recommend acceptance of this agreement to their respective principals."

Everybody thought it was a good deal. Notwithstanding that, obviously we did not receive ratification. Concerns were expressed, and we have specifically addressed those concerns.

Now, on behalf of the people we all represent and work for—and I mean doctors and government alike—it's time to move forward.

Mr Hampton: Premier, let me quote another self-described expert, who said, "We need caring hands and talented minds to improve medicare. The Harris-Eves government demoralized and mismanaged our health care professionals."

That was Dalton McGuinty again. But now we have a health minister who, instead of bringing peace and stability, has attacked, intimidated and bullied volunteer hospital boards. He engages in cheap political attacks on physicians. He attacks other front-line health care workers, and even whistle-blowers like Cyndy DeGiusti at Sick Kids.

Premier, Ontario is short 786 doctors. Some 143 Ontario communities are underserved. One in six doctors is ready to retire. Yet your Minister of Health engages in cheap political attacks on doctors.

Isn't it time to perhaps think about getting rid of your Minister of Health and bringing in someone who is prepared to work co-operatively with all the people who care about health care in Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It may be the inclination of the NDP to turn tail and run when it comes to overcoming

those hurdles and impediments that stand in the way of change that is absolutely essential. But we're not going to do that. We intend to move forward with the transformation of health care. We intend to bring better access to doctors for Ontario patients. We intend to improve the quality of care we deliver to all Ontarians. We intend to put our health care system on a much more sustainable footing. We intend to do all of those things and we will keep going in that direction.

1410

We have responded to doctors' concerns. They put out a number of concerns—in fact, six were listed by the Ontario Medical Association. We have gone out of our way to address those concerns in a very thoughtful and responsible way. Now what we want to do is work with Ontario doctors to implement the change that Ontarians are counting on all of us to deliver.

Mr Hampton: Premier, before and during the election you told the people of Ontario to choose change. Today, I'm telling you to choose change. The problem isn't with primary health care reform. That is acknowledged everywhere across Canada. It's been acknowledged by virtually everyone in Ontario for the last 15 years. The problem is, you have a health minister who thinks that the only way to solve a problem is to engage in cheap political tricks, to release polling information that is torqued and inaccurate and use it to vilify and attack doctors, to trick doctors, to engage in processes that don't build consensus, that don't build agreement.

The president said that your tactics will hinder primary care reform. I'm asking you the question: Isn't it time to change the Minister of Health and change the cheap tactics that you've been engaging in? Isn't it time to change that, rather than attacking the doctors, the hospital association and everyone else in the health care system?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Once again, we hear from the champion of the status quo in Ontario. We don't embrace that status quo, and we are moving ahead. Again, I want to quote from Roy Romanow, who said—he's talking about our plan—"This is a fundamental transformational change and it is something that all the evidence in my report indicates should be implemented." He goes on to say, "I think the government is on the right track. I believe that the government of Ontario has the support of the public."

This is the right thing to do. We look forward to moving ahead with this change. We are not going to stand by and allow ourselves to become immersed and sunk into the status quo. We know that moving ahead is not an easy thing to do. We know that the member opposite would turn tail and run at the first hint of difficulty, at the first hint of a challenge when it comes to bringing about this change. We are moving forward with this change. We're doing it in a manner that demonstrates respect for our doctors, we're doing it in a manner that indicates that we responded to their concerns, and we're doing it in a manner that indicates that we resolve to move ahead on behalf of the people of Ontario.

FABRY DISEASE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. As the minister is well aware, in the House today we have with us patients who suffer from Fabry disease, their family and their friends. They're here to plead with you, minister, as they have since last fall, one year ago, to provide permanent funding for the life-saving enzyme replacement treatment for disease that was approved by Health Canada, a treatment that has improved their quality of life. For over six months you've failed to respond to their requests. Finally, when Donna Strauss and her late husband, John, came to this Legislature, you did promise that you would provide coverage. You further promised Donna Strauss in a handwritten note that you would provide coverage. However, here we are one year later: still no action. In fact, you even failed to respond to a request from Donna for a meeting.

I ask you today, Minister: Demonstrate compassion and end the anxiety for these patients and their families. Keep your promise and guarantee that you will provide this life-saving treatment that is available in 40 other countries in this world, including wealthy countries like the United States and Australia, and poor countries like Romania. Do the right thing: End the anxiety, please.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member will know that the very same process to which her party while in government committed the province of Ontario—that's the Common Drug Review—is the process that this drug has been going through. Today's press conference follows on the heels of a Common Drug Review analysis of the products from the standpoint of their efficacy, and the Common Drug Review did not offer a favourable point of view.

This is advice that provinces across the land are taking into consideration. Here in Ontario, we'll have the drug quality therapeutics committee review the work of the Common Drug Review, and I continue to keep a watching brief on the progress with respect to this issue.

I acknowledge that for those individuals it is a very significant concern but, at the same time, processes established by that member's party while in government commit Ontario to participating with other provinces in a national review of products such as this one. It has undergone that and it now will be up to the people at the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee to review this product further.

Mrs Witmer: This minister continues to hide behind those two reviews. He knows full well they are not the appropriate committees to review this type of treatment. This is a treatment that applies only to a few people. As you know, it's for catastrophic drug treatment. This isn't like the other drugs that are consumed by thousands and thousands of people throughout this country.

I ask you today to do the right thing, and if you won't listen to me, listen to Julie Strauss, who was here in the media studio today. She said:

"For the last 18 years, I have watched my father struggle every day, and this past summer he died at the age of 50 from Fabry disease.

"I am well aware that there is a treatment for" Fabry's disease "because my father had been receiving it for two years, and thankfully [it] made the last two years ... the best two years....

"Because this disease personally affects me, I really hope that if I ever need this treatment, it will be available for me.

"The only thing I have left to say today is, if my father was given the chance to be on enzyme replacement therapy earlier in life, would he still be with us today?"

I ask the minister, will you today commit to meeting with Julie, who is here in the gallery, her mother, her brother and the other patients, and talk to them about making a commitment and following through and making sure that people like Julie don't have to—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: It seems that the honourable member, in her desire to suggest that no one has compassion that measures hers, misses a key point: She was the longest-serving health minister in a previous government and, from time to time, members are forced to be in a situation where processes that are established to work out very complex scientific matters must be utilized and adhered to, and that's what we're in the process of doing.

I've taken the opportunity over the course of my time as Minister of Health to spend a lot of time on this issue, to meet people, including John and Donna Strauss, and to meet others who are involved in this, including the manufacturers of these various products. We're in very close contact with them. That would be acknowledged through a variety of people within my ministry and the minister's office.

I'm happy to commit to a meeting, but what I cannot commit to the honourable member is jumping over processes that have been established for this very purpose. She didn't do it when she was the Minister of Health and I find it interesting that she's now counselling that I do the exact opposite of the way she conducted herself during her days as Minister of Health.

CORONER'S INQUEST

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. In September 2002, 21-year-old Martha Murray died in her home near Hamilton. Martha suffered from a potassium deficiency known as hypokalemia. She had also recently been diagnosed as bipolar and was prescribed lithium to deal with that condition. Unbeknownst to both Martha and her parents, a specialist's report in her file warned that she should not take lithium because of her potassium disorder, as that could cause cardiac arrest. And that's what happened in September 2002.

But in March 2003, the local coroner reported Martha's death as undetermined. Then, in November 2003, the paediatric death review committee of the chief coroner's office reported, "Martha's use of prescribed lithium, especially in the setting of hypokalemia, would put her at risk for a cardiac event." Then in July 2004, the investigation statement signed by the chief coroner's office declared Martha's death a natural one.

Minister, this situation demands a coroner's inquest. Will you order one?

1420

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for her question. I understand the concern of the Murray family, and I offer my condolences to them.

You should understand that a minister has never, ever directed the coroner to hold an inquest. The reason for that is quite simple: They are an independent, arm's-length body. They can't have political interference. But I appreciate the concerns of the family and the member. You should know, as you might know, that the Office of the Chief Coroner is taking a look at that particular case and will be reporting back in a matter of a couple of weeks.

Ms Martel: Martha's parents, Paul and Maryann Murray, are in the members' gallery today. They've come to Queen's Park to make this difficult personal tragedy a public one because they've been unable to get satisfactory answers to the questions they've raised. They want to ensure that doctors are aware of the risks of lithium if they have patients suffering from a potassium deficiency. They want warnings on the pharmacy drug information sheets about the risk of lithium. Most importantly, they want an inquest into the death of their daughter, because they know her death was not a natural one and they don't want other Ontario families to suffer a similar tragedy.

Minister, under section 22 of the Coroners Act, you have the authority to order an inquest. I am asking you again, on behalf of this family, will you order that done today?

Hon Mr Kwinter: I answered the member. I said that in the history of this province a minister has never ordered an inquest, and the reason, again, is quite simple. The chief coroner's office has to stay above political interference.

Having said that, the chief coroner has agreed to review the case. He will take a look at it. I'm sure that the member knows, as the family knows, it was unfortunate that the regional coroner, while he had agreed to look at it, died in his sleep before he could respond, and that created a bit of a delay. But I can assure you that the Office of the Chief Coroner is looking into—

Ms Martel: The chief coroner said it was a natural death.

Hon Mr Kwinter: Again, I can't second-guess the coroner, but in the meantime the chief coroner has agreed to conduct an investigation and will report back as soon as he's through.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Good news needs to be shared. Last month we kept yet another promise to our municipal partners. One cent per litre of the gasoline tax was confirmed as available to municipal transit authorities. A further one cent per litre will follow in two stages.

As the mayor of Pickering, I was a member of a small provincial task force in the early 1990s called the Transit Integration Task Force. That task force proposed exactly this strategy. I'm pleased now, as a member of this government, that we're delivering on this vision.

In my riding of Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, the community will benefit by \$1.2 million this year for enhanced public transit. I understand, Minister, that you were in the neighbouring riding of Oshawa this morning. Can you share with this House the good-news story in Oshawa?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): First of all, I really want to congratulate all the elected members of the Durham region for having the foresight and vision to integrate public transit in the Durham region.

This morning I was delighted to be part of an event in Durham where people were able to see the difference that the gas-tax money makes. I was delighted to be part of an event where we were able to unveil two-way bus service between Oshawa and Whitby. This new bus service will provide better service to the students going to Durham College and to the new University of Ontario Institute of Technology. This service will also benefit people with disabilities.

Let me quote what the mayor of Whitby said about our gas-tax announcement and today's event. He said, "The gas-tax funding announced by your government was well received by Whitby council, and has assured the successful launch of this important undertaking."

I will look forward to the supplementary.

Mr Arthurs: That's great news for the people of Durham region, and I'm looking forward to the very same type of announcements in my community. Could you be more precise in explaining what this means to the city of Oshawa transit system, Minister, and could you provide some update on the status of other municipalities in receiving their gas tax funding?

Hon Mr Takhar: Let me just quote what the mayor of Oshawa said: "Please extend our thanks.... It was a commitment made, and a commitment kept. This is a very welcome initiative ... and it enables us to make the improvements that we are rolling out today."

As far as the status is concerned, so far 55 municipalities have signed the agreement and will be receiving their first gas tax payment retroactive to October of this year. We are expecting that within the next few weeks we will have all agreements signed and the municipalities can start receiving their payments. For the city of Oshawa, this means that \$1.137 million will start flowing to them

and start creating the kinds of benefits I talked about before.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is to the Minister of Health. Your government promised to improve cancer wait times and survival rates and make prevention a priority. The Ontario cancer action plan, released last Thursday, warns that if the plan isn't adopted, wait times will only grow longer and patients will once again be forced to seek treatment in the United States. This action plan states that planning for the construction of two three-machine centres, one in Newmarket and the other in Barrie, was approved and ongoing. The reality is that cancer rates are increasing and there are no cancer centres between Toronto and Sudbury.

Will you commit to prioritizing the Barrie Royal Victoria Hospital and the Newmarket Southlake cancer centres to begin construction for the 2005-06 fiscal year?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I was pleased to have the opportunity to be at a press conference last week with Cancer Care Ontario, which released a three-year plan for cancer that was developed at the request of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Cancer Care Ontario is, of course, our partner and the organization we rely upon for assistance in the coordination of cancer services.

While I would acknowledge what the honourable member said about the importance of building centres to the north of Toronto, I do think it is important to heed the advice of Cancer Care Ontario, and that advice was very clear in saying that capital priorities from them include three other centres before Newmarket and Barrie come into play. Two of them I remember off the top of my head, and by the supplementary I hope to capture the third. One of those was Niagara, and expansion of capacity in Ottawa was also seen as a very significant priority.

The case in point here, though, is very simple. I have noticed that with a lot of encouragement and strong community support, campaigns are really getting rolling quite aggressively in both of these communities. I'm supportive of them, and I would agree with the honourable member that an ongoing expansion of our capital capacities, particularly in this deprived part of our province, is an absolute necessity.

Mr Tascona: My constituents and I have concerns about your failure to commit to beginning construction in the 2005-06 fiscal year, and I want you to know why. On November 3, 2004, you were questioned by my colleague from Simcoe-Grey about two new cancer centres, one in Barrie, at Royal Victoria Hospital, and one in Newmarket, at the Southlake Regional Health Centre. Your response: "... both the [cancer] centres in Newmarket and Barrie continue to be important priorities, and we're making considerable progress."

The Ontario cancer action plan, released last Thursday, in the executive summary, page 17, part B, "Increase

Capacity to Meet Predicted Demand, Action Plans," states: "Immediate priorities include Peel, Hamilton, Sudbury, Grand River and Durham. Once other planned expansions over the next three years are in place, PCOPs will also be required for Ottawa, Kingston and one centre north of the greater Toronto area."

We have attempted to find out, to no avail, from Cancer Care Ontario and your ministry which cancer centre that is required north of the greater Toronto area is being referred to in the cancer care action plan. Which one is it, Minister: Barrie RVH or Newmarket Southlake, and how is this "considerable progress" if only one of the centres is going ahead and no construction has even started?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I do think the honourable member is doing a considerable amount of injustice to the issue, because he's got the time sequencing way off, even from his own government's announcement.

On the issue of Cancer Care Ontario's report, I didn't refer to page 17 directly, but certainly, in the front pages, Cancer Care Ontario's indication to the government of Ontario has been that both of these centres north of Toronto are a priority, and that is the basis that we're operating on.

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CHILD CARE

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, last week you promised to reveal the details of your child care plan, and you came up very short. Ontario parents believed they would finally have a comprehensive program of regulated, non-profit care. But this, of course, was not to be. Last Thursday, their raised expectations became dashed hopes. All you offered was a small pilot program in just three communities, along with a thin pledge that some day, somewhere, some child might get regulated care. The Toronto Star, in fact, dismissed it as "another election-style promise."

Minister, you avoided the glare of scrutiny last week by making your announcement outside of the Legislature. Now tell us point-blank, please: How many provincial dollars will be allocated to not-for-profit regulated child care in this year?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): It is with great pleasure and pride that I say today that our Best Start plan will help children from zero to six years across the province. It'll provide healthier development, early learning and child care and good parenting programs across that age range.

The demonstration sites that the honourable member mentions are for the full hub, which will be over the next few years. The actual JK and SK wraparound programs will start immediately. The planning is starting now. We'll see the first spaces in the fall, where the communities who are able to provide the spaces because of capital foundations—those will be provided in the fall. With

others, construction will begin by the fall. By 2007-08, phase one will be completed, where we will have wraparound for a significant number of children across the province.

This is one quote from the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation, Emily Noble: "Ontario children and their parents will benefit significantly from the Best Start plan.... Teachers welcome the government's intention to bring early childhood education into the public school system."

Ms Horwath: The issue is that the minister's plan has a timetable that is so slow that a child born today will be old enough to be babysitting the next generation of children by the time the program actually kicks in, in full swing.

Have you actually set the rates, Minister, for parental subsidies? No. Have you allocated any new provincial money? No. Have you committed to a not-for-profit system? No. Did you do what you promised to do? No.

You promised 330,000 regulated child care spaces. How many will actually be available in September 2005, and how many kids are actually going to be left behind?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Not only are we fulfilling our election promise, we're surpassing it with the assistance of the federal government. We are making it more affordable for up to 84% of families in this province. We are cancelling the RESP and the RRSP criteria for subsidy, allowing more lower-middle-class parents as well as upper-working-class parents to be able to take advantage of this program.

The other thing that we'll be doing is connecting early childhood programs with other services. Parents have told us from across the province that they want one-stop shopping, one hub. This will take a few years, we do admit. We're going to do it right. We're going to do it across the province. And I'm not going to take any lectures from that member, who does not have the best interests of her community at heart when she attacks what I'm trying to do for her community.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Finance. As I meet with local businesses in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the Etobicoke Chamber of Commerce and BIAs in my riding, I encounter consistent concerns with respect to the unfair burden of taxes on small businesses in my community.

In particular, there are three areas of concern that are expressed: first, the disproportionately high levels of property tax rates paid by businesses in Etobicoke compared to the property tax rates paid by similar businesses in other parts of the GTA; second, the migration of businesses to the greater GTA as a result of substantially higher levels of education tax; and third, the lack of a small-business retail tax class which specifically addresses the reality of small businesses.

As Etobicoke-Lakeshore continues to work hard on its revitalization, the inequitable tax situation suffered by small businesses in my community is hindering our

progress. What is our government doing to help address these concerns?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I appreciate the question from my friend from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, particularly because she represents an area of the city and the GTA and the province which has its own unique and marvellous business community. I've visited some of those businesses and I understand her concern about the property tax burden. I should say to you that a number of things are taking place that allow more flexibility and moderation of those tax burdens.

The first is that we have given municipalities flexibility to either speed up or moderate the movement toward current value assessment. I made that announcement several months ago in the Legislature, and the impact of that will be good news in Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

The second and perhaps more important initiative is giving municipalities the ability to put into place a graduated tax rate system for small businesses. That also might be of help to a great area of the province.

Ms Broten: The success of urban centres in Toronto is tantamount to the health and vibrancy of our entire city. As you know, Minister, small businesses are an important sector of our economy and the hearts of each of our communities. While it's hopeful that the CVA will address this disproportionate tax issue, the transformation will take certainly many years, perhaps as long as 20 years. Recognizing that municipalities set their business property tax rates, how are we working with the municipalities to ensure success for the businesses in Etobicoke-Lakeshore?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Obviously it's the municipality, and in this case the city of Toronto, which ultimately sets the tax rates. My friend points out an important element of the system that our government inherited, and that is this slow-moving process toward market value assessment. We have taken some steps to ensure that the process becomes fairer. In particular, we have invited municipalities to speak to us directly about the possibility of having a unique class among the various classes of property which would include small business.

The point here is that the small businesses in Etobicoke-Lakeshore and right across the province are one of the very important engines, and we are concerned about the burden of property tax that they confront.

ONTARIO FILM INDUSTRY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Culture. Minister, everyone in Ontario knows we have a crisis in our film industry. The industry has been hard-hit over the last several years, and you have failed to keep your election promise to increase tax credits to 33%. The landscape in the last few months has begun to shift even more dramatically, yet last week the Chair of Management Board said you would only help the film industry sometime in the four years of your mandate.

Minister, Ontario's film industry cannot wait. People are losing their jobs today. Businesses are leaving

Ontario today for the US or other provinces. What is your strategy to preserve our film industry right now for the next six to 12 months?

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank the member of the opposite party for her question. As you know, our government understands how important Ontario film and television tax credits are both for the industry and for the province's economy. More than 20,000 direct jobs and 32,000 indirect jobs in the film and television industry have been supported by tax credits during a difficult period for all cultural industry.

Our government continues to develop policy that supports our international competitiveness. This includes changes to the Ontario film and television tax credit that increase its value. The enhanced tax credits will result in seven to eight million new dollars invested in the film and TV sector. One announcement allows producers to claim development and labour costs. They can also claim budgets which include a federal contribution. So we are doing what is necessary, recognizing the importance of tax credits in the film industry.

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Mrs Munro: Minister, I don't think you understand the importance of this issue. There are 20,000 people, but these are 20,000 people who stand to lose their jobs. We're talking about real people facing a crisis. Personally, I know set designers, caterers, hairdressers and stuntmen who earn their living in this industry. Do you have any idea of the amount of talent and expertise that we risk losing in this province?

Just as a simple, straightforward example, Wayne Ford is the owner of Mar-Lyn Lumber in Ajax, a small business that employs 10 people. Mar-Lyn is one of the largest suppliers of construction materials for movie sets in the Toronto area, working with about 85% of all productions. Wayne and his employees do good work, yet Wayne is certain he is likely to go out of business with the current crisis in the film industry. With Christmas a month away, what message should I give to Wayne, his employees and their families, and to the thousands of skilled and talented people in this province about what your government will do to save jobs now in the film industry?

Hon Mrs Meilleur: As I said in my first answer, our government understands the importance of the film industry in Ontario. In the last budget, we improved the tax credit, and we will continue to work with the industry because it is important and we want to make sure the film industry continues to flourish here in Ontario.

PUBLIC TELEVISION TÉLÉVISION PUBLIQUE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Culture again.

Minister, when you considered the privatization of TVO a while back, the people of this province fought back and fought hard to keep it in public hands. They

told you they value the high-quality educational programming TVOntario provides. Now we learn that you are ready to cut nearly, I hear, \$2 million from their budget. It is impossible for TVO to continue its fundraising efforts and conduct normal operations when threats of cuts hang over their head. Can you put the minds of the people of Ontario at ease and let them know that you are not making cuts to this valuable public service?

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Thank you for the question. We know that TVO and TFO are very, very important for the community and they offer quality services. We are working with TVO and TFO to continue their good service in Ontario.

I will ask that the next question would be directed to the minister responsible for TFO/TVO, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Mr Marchese: We understand that the programming that's delivered is important. That wasn't the question. It's a different type of question, and I will ask you again, Madam Minister.

Nous entendons que TFO recevra bientôt des coupures de millions de dollars. La communauté francophone est déjà mal servie par les médias en Ontario. TFO offre de la programmation française qui est reconnue autour du monde. Les francophones en Ontario seraient bouleversés d'apprendre qu'ils pourraient perdre des émissions distinguées comme Panorama. Madame la ministre, pourquoi votre gouvernement est-il prêt à offrir la communauté francophone en sacrifice?

L'hon. M^{me} Meilleur: Je suis consciente de l'importance que TFO joue dans la communauté francophone. Ils offrent des services de qualité, et nous travaillons à continuer avec TFO à produire ces programmes de qualité.

Alors, ce que nous cherchons présentement c'est d'autres partenaires, et nous savons qu'il y a d'autres provinces qui sont intéressées à acheter les bons services de TFO et de TVO.

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. All of the members in this Legislature understand how important it is for the government of Ontario to promote physical activity amongst its young people. However, for many low-income families, it is difficult for children to access recreation facilities due to cost. Minister, can you tell me what you are doing to break down cost barriers for young kids in my riding?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan makes an excellent point: It's difficult for young people in our province who come from modest means to access facilities and participate in physical activity programming due to fiscal barriers. That is why my ministry has initiated, along with the Ministry of Education, the community use of schools program to lower the cost to

non-profit organizations and to increase the utilization of the facilities, and the communities in action fund to assist community groups in the formulation of recreational programs for lower-income children.

On Wednesday of last week, I had the privilege of announcing two such grants in Thunder Bay. I visited the Thunder Bay Boys and Girls Club to present a cheque of \$10,488 to increase physical activity and sport participation rates in Thunder Bay. In addition, along with Ian Sutherland of the Lakehead District School Board, I made the announcement of a community use of schools agreement, which will see the Lakehead school board receive \$132,000. With the signing of this agreement, the Lakehead board will eliminate all fees for non-profit organizations and increase the number of hours that schools are open by 3,000 hours.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): That is absolutely wonderful for the young people and the students of Thunder Bay.

I understand as well, Minister, that you made another very significant announcement when you were in Thunder Bay regarding another aspect of your portfolio, that being tourism, which of course is of very great importance to the north. Can you tell the Legislature a little bit about the northern Ontario tourism marketing strategy and some of the projects your ministry is working on and supporting in that regard?

Hon Mr Bradley: As the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North would know, tourism is an extremely important part of the northern economy. The northern Ontario tourism marketing strategy will allow us to work with our government and private sector partners to raise awareness of northern tourism destinations right across Ontario, Canadian and international markets by helping to develop tourism packages and products. The strategy will also aim to increase tourist traffic by some 15%, tourism spending by 20%, and 3,000 more jobs in northern Ontario we hope to be able to create.

Our government, through the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp, is contributing \$585,000 to produce a 2005 Outdoor Adventure Guide, a francophone Outdoor Adventure Guide and training materials for the Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce to assist them in identifying new tourism products.

The northern Ontario tourism marketing strategy is part of this government's \$5-million commitment to tourism in northern Ontario.

PETITIONS

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at

risk for medical conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

"Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

"Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

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"Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services" will not depend "on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician."

This has several thousand signatures, and it has my signature as well.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that

newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that"—

Interjection: Sign it.

Mr Qaadri:—"facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

As per the suggestion of the MPP for Durham, I am pleased to sign it.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Petitions? The member from Oxford.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you—

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Do you represent Oxford now?

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in Parliament assembled:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, draw the attention of the House to the following:

"That Ontarians are being asked to consider alternate forms of health care delivery due to escalating costs; and

"That 65% of Ontarians surveyed in October 2002 objected to the public funding of abortion on demand; and

"That almost all abortions are done for 'socio-economic' reasons in Canada; and

"That the Canada Health Act imposes no duty on provinces to fund any services other than those which are medically necessary; and

"That there are no legal impediments preventing provinces from" delisting "abortion.

"Therefore, your petitioners call on the Parliament of Ontario to enact legislation which will de-insure induced abortion."

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and...

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

I will sign this petition.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has failed to ensure that students are protected from individuals whose past behaviours have directly harmed children; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has chosen to ignore the children's aid society's recommendation that certain individuals not work with children; and

"Whereas the introduction of a 'volunteer' into the school system must not be solely at the discretion of the principal; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised to make sure schools are safe so students can concentrate on learning; and

"Whereas the Liberal government promised to ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to amend the Education Act to place restrictions on the eligibility of persons who act as volunteers in schools, and to include as a formal requirement that volunteers be subject to the approval of the school board and parent council."

I've signed my name.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition written to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my name to this petition and give it to Adam.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I have this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from a group of commuters in Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of

land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

I am one of those residents. I'm pleased to sign this petition and to ask Evan to carry it for me.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to present this petition on behalf of the riding of Durham.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's seniors have worked long and hard to build the outstanding quality of life the citizens of Ontario enjoy today; and

"Whereas seniors' drug benefits enable older persons to lead healthier lives and avoid more complex care in hospitals and nursing homes; and

"Whereas, in addition to their taxes, many seniors already contribute toward their prescription drugs through deductibles and dispensing fees; and

"Whereas the vast majority of seniors face increasing costs on fixed pensions and cannot afford to see their incomes eroded further;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not eliminate or reduce the provincial drug benefits provided to seniors."

My constituents are concerned about this; therefore, I sign it and support it.

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ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned," petition the Ontario government to support the passage "of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I'm pleased to sign this and ask Ellen to carry it for me.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition signed by thousands of good Cambrian citizens that reads:

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-

wide public hearings on water source protection legislation:

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I am pleased to sign my name to that.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the riding of Oxford is made up of many small communities, which have little or no access to municipal water service and are home to churches, halls and other public buildings that must be on private wells; and

"Whereas these buildings are now required to abide by regulation 170 of the Safe Drinking Water Act, which calls for expensive and unnecessary reports and tests if the buildings are to be used; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario maintains it will institute all recommendations of the O'Connor report, including number 84 that recommends provincial funding when approved systems are not economically viable for the owner; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment agrees the regulation is flawed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment put enforcement of regulation 170 on hold until either a provincial funding program is put in place to assist rural public buildings and the organizations they house meet the regulation, or a change to the regulation is made to make it more reasonable and appropriate."

I affix my signature to this petition, as I agree with it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT (FALL), 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (AUTOMNE)

Mr Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to implement 2004 Budget measures, enact the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004 and amend various Acts / *Projet de loi 149, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2004, édictant la Loi de 2004 sur la Société d'émission d'obligations de développement du Nord de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Sorbara?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): It's a pleasure and an honour for me to be speaking on this bill. I just would inform you now that the time allotted for the opening speeches will be shared with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who will make all the salient points. I'm really just here to introduce him, and I hope you'll bear with me.

You will recall that I provided this House with a summary of this act through ministers' statements when the bill was introduced a few days ago in the Legislature. I am going to just highlight some of the points I made at that time.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Maybe you should try reading it sometime.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Did you hear a cry from the Simcoe area? We'll just ignore that.

Mr Dunlop: Read the bill.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend says, "Read the bill." I'm quite familiar with the contents of the bill, and I hope that one day the members opposite will concentrate on the content. I'm going to try to ignore them now but I know that my friend from, I think, Simcoe-Grey is rather jumpy today, so it will be a test.

Anyway, I'm going to share my time with my colleague, my parliamentary assistant. I hope, when he addresses the House on this bill, you will give him some leeway to talk at least a little bit about the steps he has been taking over the course, really, of the past 13 months on the auto insurance file. We're very proud of how much progress we've made on that file, and we are particularly proud of the work he's done on that.

The essence of Bill 149 is to complete the work that was really launched when we presented the budget in this Legislature back on May 18. As you recall, at that time the budget really represented a four-year plan to do four important things:

The first was to get us on the road to building a stronger economy. The second was to get us on the road to bringing financial health back to the very business of government. We've started that as well. Third, to make significant investments in key public services like health care: We've done that with historic new levels of funding for hospitals, with new initiatives to transform our system to improve home care and primary care, and you've heard about that from the Minister of Health for many, many months. The fourth initiative, and in a way perhaps the most important in the budget, is the investments we've made already in education.

I believe, and I think many commentators on Ontario politics will agree with me, that over the course of the eight and a half years the Conservative Party was in government, it was really education that suffered the brunt of their anger and of their inability to manage the public agenda properly. I want to be careful of my language here, because I know you're paying careful attention.

Let me put it another way: By the time we came to power, the education system in Ontario—primary and

secondary—was in one heck of a mess. For that reason, among others, we made building new strength in education one of our first priorities, and the budget went a long way to set out the course we would be taking.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): You're going to fix it.

1510

Hon Mr Sorbara: And I tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax, all you have to do, really, is talk to a teacher, talk to a principal, talk to an administrator, and they'll say, "We know that you haven't turned water into wine, but already our schools are in better shape."

What they appreciate most is that we respect the importance, the dignity and the status of those wonderful men and women who are teachers in this province and in whose hands every day of the school year we entrust the care and the development of our children. The worst thing about the Tory legacy was the eight-and-a-half-year war on teachers, which will be the legacy of that government. But I'm not here to talk about that; I'm here to talk about Bill 149, and I'm here to talk about the way in which we are ultimately implementing our budget plan.

Admittedly, and I said this at the time of the introduction of the bill, it's a very long bill. In a sense, it's a very technical bill, and I'm not sure the House today wants to hear about all those technicalities. But I think they would be interested in hearing about some of the major thrusts in the bill that take us on the way to a stronger economy and a healthier province.

I want to start off, if I could—

Mr Flaherty: Taxing is very healthy for the economy.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Well, I hear the member from Whitby-Ajax talking about taxes. In fact, the major tax initiative of this bill is to cut taxes, to cut corporate taxes, to cut capital taxes and, indeed, over the course of 10 years to eliminate capital tax in the province of Ontario.

Hon Mr Sorbara: But let's get on with some of the important initiatives that will strengthen our economy. I really want to talk about two initiatives that are worthy of highlight.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Interjections, yes, but continuous? Three speakers—I'm having trouble listening. Minister.

Hon Mr Sorbara: The two that I would like to highlight are the steps we're taking in the apprenticeship system—I think probably these initiatives, more than anything else, define one of the major elements of our approach to stronger economic growth because they represent investments in young people to help them be trained to be North America's leaders in workplace training.

I remember the steps that I had the honour of taking way back in 1985 to 1987 in workplace training. At that time, I had the honour of being Minister of Skills Development, and I am glad to see that now, almost 13 years later, the government is returning to an emphasis on the importance of workplace training. Thousands and

thousands of young people will enter apprenticeship programs as a result of these initiatives. Thousands and thousands of employers will receive payroll assistance to hire new apprentices as a result of these initiatives. So on the workplace side, this initiative of developing the strength of our workforce deserves special attention.

The other thing that I think is worthy of note here as we begin second reading debate is the investments we're making in the Ontario commercialization investment fund program. Now, for many people that's a very long title, and it is; I think I would have given some more thought to perhaps giving it a more easily articulated title. What's important is what this new fund is going to do. We take advantage of \$36 million of taxpayers' money and invest it, along with the private sector, to leverage \$120 million in new pools of investment capital to invest in leading-edge technology businesses. This kind of investment is targeted directly at those new economies, which I believe will be an important part of the new economy over the next 10 and 20 years in Ontario.

Interjection: You're darned right. The knowledge industry.

Hon Mr Sorbara: So on the one hand, investing in workers and, on the other hand, investing in new and creative ways and in what my friend from Mississauga West appropriately calls knowledge industries.

I want to point out a couple of more things this bill does that I think are worthy of note today, and which personally, when I presented the budget, gave me a great deal of satisfaction. The first is an increase of some 25% on the seniors' property tax credit, which has been around in the province for over a decade. I remember during the election campaign how often I heard from seniors—in Woodbridge, Maple, Aurora and King—that the thing they feared most was not having the ability to manage rising costs and not being able to keep their own home. I'm talking about seniors who have modest means, seniors on fixed incomes, seniors who only have a pension, perhaps from 20 or 30 years' working in the construction industry. Those voices continued to ring in my ear with clarity as we prepared the budget.

This property tax credit had not been adjusted for over a decade. When we presented the budget, I was very proud to announce a 25% increase. That's an additional \$125 per family and will touch some 350,000 seniors in the province. Some 35,000 seniors will receive the tax credit for the first time. This is real help to people of modest means whose only interest is to stay within their own home.

The other initiative that I think needs to be highlighted is the fact that this bill creates the northern Ontario grow bonds program. If you'd been travelling with me through the north in the pre-budget hearings, you would have heard, in community after community in northern Ontario, a plea to become real participants in the growth of this great economy in this great province.

For eight and a half years the north was shut out of Tory economic policy—just shut out. You need to go up

north and talk to people, and they will tell you about the fact that virtually nothing happened over the course of eight and a half years during the Tory administration. I was determined that in our budget we would begin to turn that around.

One of the elements that we're using is the grow bonds program, which will provide new capital, investment capital, for entrepreneurs in the north; capital they do not now have access to, to create the new businesses that will create the new jobs that will bring new economic activity and new vibrancy to the northern economy.

There were a number of other steps that we took in the northern prosperity program that we presented at the time of the budget, but this one, I think, merits particular attention because it really grows out of the north. This grow bonds program is something that the northern Ontario chambers of commerce had been asking government for for quite some time. I remember, when we were still in opposition, that they presented to us a framework for a grow bonds program. In the presentation, they gave each of us a seedling pine tree. I asked for several more because my grandkids love to plant trees. I thought I'd bring them home and have them plant them in the backyard and that would remind me, if we were to win the election, that we really ought to think carefully about putting this program in place.

I'm very hopeful that the northern Ontario grow bonds program, which is already the subject of a pilot project—I'm hoping that when we look back at having passed Bill 149, we'll be able to say that there was a special effort in the bill to ensure that we provide northerners with the same opportunities that those participating in the economy in southern Ontario have the advantage of.

1520

I'm seeing that time is pressing here, and my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence is preparing to give his views on Bill 149.

I want to sum up by simply pointing out that Bill 149 is really part of a larger story, but it is an important component in our determination to create greater transparency in government. In that sense, it's part of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which is before this Legislature. It also has a companion in the Audit Act, which has now passed third reading. The Audit Act increases dramatically the powers of the Auditor General to ensure that we have real value in the money that we spend, whether right here in government or with various transfer payment agencies. It is part of the budget bill that we presented in May. Together, those acts represent the legislative considerations that implement the budget that we presented—my goodness—almost six months ago.

When I introduced this bill and when I gave this House an update on the economy, I made two points, and I want to restate those points as I conclude my remarks. We've been in power now, we've been in government, we've had these responsibilities, for some 13 months, and I can say, with absolute confidence and clarity, that

already in Ontario our economy is stronger, and already in Ontario our financial situation is healthier.

We have a long way to go. Passing this bill will help us down that road.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's a pleasure to follow the Minister of Finance. As he was relating this bill to how it affects ordinary people, I would also like to continue in that vein. One of the most understandable parts of a complex bill for ordinary Ontarians is the seniors' property tax credit. As the minister said, the seniors' property tax credit, for the first time in 11 years, has been expanded by 85 million extra dollars; 85 million extra dollars will go in the pockets of seniors—low-income, moderate-income seniors. This is for relief in their property taxes. Whether they live in an apartment as tenants, or in a home, they'll be able to access this tax credit.

Members opposite were sneering at the fact that a senior can get a break of \$625 on their taxes. But the seniors I know in Eglinton-Lawrence think that \$625 off their property tax is a significant amount of money, and they're thankful for every \$625 they can get in their pockets.

Interjection.

Mr Colle: Again, the former government basically sneers at this. The members opposite are sneering at that: 625 hard-earned dollars back to those seniors who have worked all their lives, made sacrifices, sent their kids to school and paid off their mortgages. What we're saying as a government is, "You deserve a little bit of help." We're giving it to them with these 85 million extra dollars in their property taxes.

It's a credit that means that 33,000 extra Ontario families will be eligible for this tax credit that weren't eligible under the previous government. Again, 33,000 ordinary Ontario families, whether they live in Stratford, Scarborough, Willowdale or Mississauga, are going to get a break. As tenants, because they pay their property taxes through their rent, or as homeowners, they're going to get this break. That's one part of this bill that the minister is referring to.

The minister also asked me to make a few references to our reforming of auto insurance. I would like to say, again, that some very valuable things have been done in this province with the leadership of the superintendent of financial services, along with the superintendents of financial services right across Canada, where, for the first time in the history of this province of Ontario—I know the Deputy Speaker was in the insurance business at one time. He'll be glad to know that, for the first time in the history of this province, come January 1, every person buying auto insurance in Ontario will have full disclosure—the broker will have full disclosure. In other words, the broker will tell the client the number of companies the broker represents. Whether it's two, three, five, 10 or 15 companies, that will be revealed for the first time in the history of Ontario.

Also, the commission that each broker receives from all the companies they do business with will be listed in a

disclosure form to each customer. That's the first time full disclosure will be done.

Also, all other fees and commissions and financial arrangements between the broker and companies will be made for the first time to the citizens of the province of Ontario.

Again, Ontario is the leading jurisdiction in disclosure. I know that Jim Hall, the superintendent of insurance for the province of Saskatchewan—an NDP government—has said that Ontario has taken great steps toward this whole new era of disclosure when it comes to financial services.

I know it's being done with the mutual funds area. It's being done in all the financial sectors. Insurance is coming up to the plate with their disclosure and transparency.

Also, I should mention that when we came to office last year, there were 220,000 Ontarians in the Facility Association. The Facility Association is where the worst drivers go. If they've had an unfortunate, serious accident or a drunk driving conviction, they go to the Facility Association. The rates are very high. You could pay up to \$5,000, \$6,000 or \$10,000 a year for insurance. When we came to office last year at this time, there were 220,000 Ontarians in Facility paying very high rates. I can say that the good news is, in the month of November, that 220,000 is now down to 84,000. So it's a dramatic drop-off in the number of people who are paying these extraordinarily high rates in Facility. Now it has been depopulated from 220,000 to 84,000. That is a dramatic improvement in the number of people who are paying extraordinarily high rates.

I should also mention that for the first time in the province of Ontario, people who inadvertently write an NSF cheque to their insurance company will not be denied insurance. That's another change we're making to insurance.

Another thing we're also doing, which will come to fruition very quickly, is that we will end credit scoring in the province of Ontario for auto insurance. Credit scoring means that an insurance company or financial institution can basically deny you insurance because of your lifestyle; in other words, if you're a tenant or if you perhaps had a case of bankruptcy or if something happened years ago, your financial standing could have an impact on you maybe not being insured, or it could cause you to have higher rates. That's called credit scoring. We are now, for the first time in Ontario, making credit scoring not allowed. It's no longer going to be allowed to be used. Credit scoring, lifestyle scoring, will no longer be allowed in Ontario.

So I know, Mr Speaker, that you're very interested in some of those reforms in auto insurance.

I should mention that auto insurance rates had been going up by 43% over the last three years before we came to office. Since we've come to office, the rates on the street are down 12%, on average. So we are seeing things finally going in the right direction: There's a 12% reduction. Remember, there are over eight million Ontar-

ians who rely on auto insurance. That's not to say that every single one of those eight million has a reduction. But overall, of those 8.3 million, after three years of skyrocketing rates, we're starting to see the rates go down.

There's more availability of insurance. As I mentioned many times, there's still a lot more work to do in auto insurance and insurance in general, because for too many years there were many forces at work in the marketplace that weren't taken care of. We're seeing the market competitive again. We're seeing improvements, but, as I said, there's still work to be done.

Getting back to this bill, that also deals with the financial plan for this province—and we do have a plan. I know that the minister, in passing, talked about the new knowledge-based economy. One of the most fascinating connections between Bill 149 and something that is going on right across the street, under our noses—if you want to see where the new economy of Canada, of Ontario and of Toronto is, it is going on on College Street in the city of Toronto. I know the former government was interested in this. We are finishing the—

Interjection.

1530

Mr Colle: Well, you're interested, but we're putting our money where our mouth is. The government talked about things—we're putting money into this program called the MARS program. It is across the street on College Street. This budget allocates monies for that kind of cutting-edge technology, which I know the government opposite, the former government, talked about. We are putting this in the budget with a significant investment in funds for what is called new, knowledge-based economic activity, where you combine the best brains out of universities and the private sector with cutting-edge research—and again, along with the private sector.

As I said to you, the members of the Legislature, if you walk across the street, in front of the Toronto General Hospital, you can see the MARS project being built literally from the ground up. So this budget has an allocation of money for a program that is going to be very helpful to projects like MARS which, again, combines some of the best and brightest people we have in Ontario with initiatives that the government is doing. That program is called the Ontario commercialization investment funds program. These funds, again, leverage new pools of private money so you can have scientists, researchers, work together with the private sector and develop the most cutting-edge technology that is of benefit in the medical sciences sector and other sectors that are of a scientific nature.

As you know, I have mentioned many times before that the economy of Ontario is changing. If you go to Hamilton, the number one employer is the Hamilton Health Sciences centre. There are well-paying jobs that make us competitive with the rest of the world when we invest in things like the MARS project and the Hamilton Health Sciences centre. That's what this budget tries to do with its forward-looking approach.

I should mention that the other thing this government is doing is that we've committed to, and started to,

eliminate the capital tax. As many of you know, the capital tax, in essence, is really a tax that has nothing to do with your earned income or how well a company is doing; it's a tax on assets. It's considered a real job-killer, this tax. So we were encouraged—I know in the public hearings that we had across the province last year, many deputations were given on the need to eliminate the capital tax. We have started to eliminate this capital tax, and we're going to do it in a gradual way. The reason we're going to do it in a gradual way is because we're very cognizant of the financial pressures in Ontario and the demands we have on increased services in our hospital and health sector and our education sector etc. So we are eliminating this capital tax. It will be gone by the year 2012. It is a tax that really served no benefit. It wasn't a really positive message to send to the business community, so we are eliminating the capital tax with this act. Again, it's going to be phased in.

Also, the minister mentioned the northern grow bonds. The northern grow bonds are really part of a strategy this government has to ensure that the forgotten parts of Ontario are not neglected any longer. Certainly, Ontario has seen growth and prosperity over the last 10 or 11 years, but there are parts of this province which have not experienced or shared in that economic prosperity. I know a lot of us who were in Pickle Lake, Attawapiskat and Sioux Lookout saw the fact that this previous government basically neglected northern Ontario. In this budget, we're saying that you can no longer do that if you're going to be a competitive province. You're going to have to share the wealth of this province with all Ontarians—not only northern Ontario, but the fact there are strains and ribbons of Ontarians right across every community who have not prospered from the economic growth in the last number of years. That is the reason why you hear the Premier and the minister talk about what is sometimes referred to as forgotten federalism.

We have to start to appreciate, as Ontarians, that we work very hard, we pay a lot of taxes and we love the rest of this country, but we can no longer be expected to pay \$23 billion more to help other provinces than we get back from the federal government. We're saying that we want to help the other provinces, but if we can't keep some of this money here in Ontario to invest in northern Ontario, to invest in the poorer neighbourhoods of Toronto or of Chatham-Kent, we won't have the prosperity whereby we can build the wealth to share with the rest of this great country.

So one of the messages we're trying to give the rest of Canada and our own citizens is that, as Ontarians, we have to be nurturers of this great province's ability to create and manage wealth. By doing that, we can take care of our sick and our elderly, take care of our urban needs and take care of our housing needs, but we have to be able to keep some of these resources here in Ontario so the north can prosper and not be left behind like it was by the last government, and so our urban centres can prosper.

We have to have some money left here in Ontario so we can put back into our roads and highways, public

transit and child care, but we can't do that by writing these cheques for \$23 billion every year. We want to help the rest of Canada, but we have to also ensure that the engine of Canada is taken care of and nurtured.

This budget attempts to invest direct money into northern Ontario. It helps seniors, it invests in the new economy—I mentioned the MARS project—and it talks about modernizing this government, because the minister has said very unequivocally that the status quo is not an option. I know that Tories want to take us back to the days of Newt Gingrich. That's a failed policy. That didn't work. All it does is increase your deficits, as they left us with that deficit. That's proof that Newt Gingrich economics don't work.

We're looking at being modern in terms of investing in all Ontarians, and not just having tax cuts by themselves. We're saying you have to invest in people, you have to invest in universities, you have to invest in our poor, you have to invest in all Ontarians, no matter where they live. As I said, we can't continue to ignore the youth who are going into university, you can't continue to ignore northern Ontario and you can't continue ignore cities. That's why we put part of the gas tax back into the cities and that's why cities all across this province are saying that this province is finally listening. That's why our schools—and if you go to any high school in Ontario and elementary school, they'll tell you that there's a government paying attention to education for a change and not beating up on educators and students.

So that's what this bill is about. It's about investing in people, their aspirations, their future, and not just business. It's our greatest strength that we're investing in, and that is Ontario's incredible people, who work so hard. They want Ontario to prosper, and we're going to try to help them with this budget.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to be able to rise now and talk a little bit about Bill 149 and some of the comments that were made by the minister and his parliamentary assistant. I listen to these comments, and it's almost like a comedy hour, some of the things they're taking credit for. If anything good is happening, they take credit for it.

For example, the MARS program; we can talk a lot about that. This guy right in front of me broke the sod on it. Mr Flaherty turned the sod with Allan Rock. Now here we have Mr Colle trying to make it sound as though Dalton McGuinty actually had something to do with it. Nothing. It's just pathetic. It's a comical hour. I'm surprised they sit there and actually try to take credit for something like that. And we can talk a lot more about that after.

There are so many things in this bill. Again, I think he referred to it as—what did the minister say here?—part of a larger story. I wonder where the story is going to end. I wonder what's going to happen in 2007. That'll be part of the larger story, and I think you already know what's going to happen. I can see people going for cover right now. It's the end of the Dalton McGuinty government, because they're a one-term wonder, with the type of nonsense we're seeing in this bill.

1540

I'm going to be sharing part of the time with Mr Flaherty, in doing his leadoff, and we'll use the full time. We'll use the full hour, because we think that if the bill is so important to the government, they would at least find enough speakers to be able to talk to the leadoff for an hour—if, in fact, it's that important. But because it was part of a larger story that's probably going to see the destruction of this government, I guess that's why they only want to speak for 30 minutes on this bill. I look forward to further debate on it.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I'm going to do something a little rare in this House. I'm going to actually ask some questions of the PA. I hope he's listening, because this is a rather arcane bill. It's filled with all kinds of stuff, and he only talked very briefly about some of its sections. I just want to ask him what some of these things mean to him.

Schedule 9 of the bill is for "an election so that a Canadian subsidiary of a foreign bank can transfer its unused Ontario losses and unused corporate minimum tax credits to a Canadian branch of the foreign bank." Nobody has spoken about that yet. I can't find out any information. Exactly what does that mean, Mr PA?

There are some other beauties here too. Here's one under the Electricity Act: Schedule 11, new subsections 94(7) and 94(7.1), and amendments to the regulation-making authority in subsection 96(1) deal with this cascading effect by providing regulation-making authority for the refund of the transfer tax, where the proceeds of a transfer are reinvested in a manner prescribed in the regulations. What does that mean? What are you trying to change?

This is the stuff you've given to us. The last one is a really good one. I think this is pretty simple, and you won't even have to run somewhere to find out what this is. Under schedule 12, the Employer Health Tax Act, the minister can exclude remuneration for everyone, except this provision does not apply to the parties to the application in *Blue Jays v Ontario*. Why are you exempting *Blue Jays v Ontario* in this bill?

These are three very good questions. I'm going to ask questions instead of making comments. I will be delighted to see what the PA has to respond.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I am pleased to respond to the comments from my colleagues the Minister of Finance and his parliamentary assistant, the MPP from Eglinton-Lawrence. As my colleague from Beaches-East York mentioned, tax bills are full of arcane trivia that are for tax lawyers and tax accountants, but what I'd like to talk about are some items that are of more of general interest.

I'd like to address the apprenticeship training tax credit, because we understand that if the Ontario economy is going to prosper, we need to invest in apprenticeship programs. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, within the next 15 years, 52% of the skilled tradespeople in Ontario are expected to retire. We know that industries are expecting shortages in the skills trades.

We're addressing that with this budget in two ways. Firstly, we will be providing new funding of \$11.7 million annually to expand the number of apprenticeship placements to 26,000 young people. But as I know from some of my past experiences, it isn't just a matter of expanding the number of apprenticeship placements at community colleges and training colleges. It's also important for those young people to actually get positions with businesses where they can complete their training. In order to do that, we have set up the apprenticeship training tax credit to encourage employers to provide the training that the apprentices need.

The tax credit will pay up to \$5,000 of an eligible apprentice's salary each year for three years. The maximum credit will be \$15,000 over the first 36 months of an apprenticeship. We know that this is critical if we're going to train our young people.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I was fascinated by the comments by the parliamentary assistant, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, in his reference to this modest effort at recognizing the costs and the challenges financially that seniors face. It doesn't square it with a government that, on the one hand, is handing out a couple of pennies to seniors while, on the other, it's grabbing out of their pockets and their bank books and savings hundreds and hundreds, and in some cases thousands, more dollars as a result of the election of the Dalton McGuinty government.

We can start with hydro as the classic example of a broken promise, where seniors are now facing—they had protection as consumers, and in particular as seniors, and that protection has now been taken away by an act of this parliament by the Liberal government, which will result in double-digit increases in hydro bills for seniors, who will be experiencing very cold weather this winter.

The education property tax credit, which they cancelled for the most modest of seniors, would have been a \$460-a-year rebate for seniors to assist them because they are house-rich and income-poor. To understand what seniors are going through in this province, the member opposite should know that another \$125 is not going to keep them in their home longer. In fact, for people in Toronto, his seniors in his riding, the average rebate for a senior paying education taxes is in excess of \$1,000. That is the kind of meaningful support that seniors need and deserve, and which seniors got from the previous government. They're not getting it from this government; they're getting \$125.

Mr Dunlop: Plus, they're paying the health tax.

Mr Jackson: Plus they're paying a health tax. In nursing homes, for the first time in Ontario's history, we've got people who are bedridden now paying the health tax in this province. That's what you have done for seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Colle: Just to mention, the briefings are available. It is a substantive bill, so if you want specific questions answered—I know you mentioned the *Blue Jays*; that's a

commitment we made to get rid of that loophole where the Blue Jays were not going to pay the health tax. We are taking care of that loophole, and that's something we've committed to.

The other thing: I know the Conservatives always scoff at \$625 to seniors; they say that's pennies. But I know that seniors in Eglinton-Lawrence feel that \$625 off their property tax is significant, and they are happy to see it. The Tories think that's pennies; we think that's a help. We have a lot more work to do for our seniors, but certainly what we think we're doing with this bill is ensuring there are some progressive ways of helping people.

All the last government did was say, "We can solve everything in this world by giving people a tax cut." Well, you know what that resulted in: a \$5.6-billion hole in the budget, a health care system in ruins, an education system in ruins, our cities turned into beggars and our seniors basically unable to make ends meet. That's the legacy of the tax-cut-solves-all failed economic policy of the previous government.

We're saying we have to modernize government, transform government to start investing in new, cutting-edge industries. Look what happened with our investment in Ford. We are now taking over from Michigan as the auto production centre in central North America. We're surpassing Michigan. The last government said it was foolish to invest in the auto industry. They wouldn't invest in Ford or General Motors. We're saying that investment means good-paying jobs and benefits to people. The former government never believed in investing in a future. All they did was give tax cuts to their corporate friends. That doesn't work.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Applause.

Mr Flaherty: Thank you for that resounding ovation.

I am going to share my time with the member for Simcoe North.

I find it interesting to listen to the parliamentary assistant talk about our now surpassing Michigan in the auto sector. He really should go back and look at his numbers. He's the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, and I think the people of Ontario expect not only the minister but the parliamentary assistant to have some familiarity with the facts in the province of Ontario. In fact, we exceeded Michigan production two or three years ago, if he'd like to go back and actually check the number of vehicles. All the parliamentary assistant needs to know is the facts.

He talks about the Toronto Blue Jays. It was the last Liberal government, as I recall, that spent \$600 million, more or less, of the taxpayers' money in the province of Ontario, to build what? The SkyDome, which they are now selling, which is now being sold, for, I think it was \$25 million for the Blue Jays. Now there is a good use of taxpayers' money. Congratulations, Liberals, for once again squandering taxpayers' money. You know how to spend it and you know how to tax. It's tax and spend, tax and spend; it was from 1985 to 1990, and it is now during

the current government. If there is a problem, increase taxes and increase spending.

1550

The parliamentary assistant talks about MARS. He may not know what it stands for. It stands for Medical and Related Sciences. It was funded through the government of Ontario under Premier Eves; the discussions took place under Premier Harris; the decision was made long before the current government came into office, and the funding decision made. Not only that, but the co-operative effort was made with the government in Ottawa. I was the minister responsible here at the time, and Allan Rock was the minister responsible in Ottawa. With the approval of both cabinets, we made the announcement, and we also did the groundbreaking across the street. In fact, the parliamentary assistant might want to walk across the street and look at the sign; he'll see that for Ontario, it says SuperBuild. Now, when the Liberal government came along they actually got rid of SuperBuild and called it something else.

So I say to the parliamentary assistant, get some air, go across the street and have a look at the sign. It would help him kind of figure out, "Oh, that wasn't our government, actually. It was the previous government that made that decision." That would help him, as I say, get his facts straight, because it's important when you're at the finance ministry to have some familiarity with the facts, so that the people of Ontario will have confidence in the Minister of Finance and have confidence in the parliamentary assistant. It takes time, it takes a lot of work, it takes a lot of hours every week at finance to stay up on the numbers, but it's important work for the people of Ontario. I hope the parliamentary assistant will avail himself of the people at the ministry who have the facts so that he becomes familiar with them.

I was surprised to hear the parliamentary assistant make an attack on equalization. This is a Liberal government in Ontario that is attacking, through the parliamentary assistant, one of the fundamentals of the Canadian relationship. That is, we have acknowledged for years in this country that there needs to be an equalization formula so that other parts of Canada can enjoy a level of public services comparable with other, wealthier parts of the country. It's appalling, actually, to hear the parliamentary assistant come to this Legislative Assembly and say that he wants to attack this pillar of Canadian democracy. There are only two, just now three, "have" provinces: this province of Ontario, the province of Alberta and, just recently, the province of Saskatchewan.

I think I understand the background to that; I think I understand the thinking by the Minister of Finance and by his parliamentary assistant. Because when I look at the numbers and I look at what's proposed in Bill 149, the picture becomes increasingly clear that this government is incapable, incompetent in terms of management and fiscal planning and left to their own resources, the resources of the people of Ontario, they're not going to be able to balance the budget because they can't control their spending. So their way out is going to be to blame

Ottawa and say to the Martin Liberal government in Ottawa, "You've got to bail us out." The rationale for bailing us out is going to be, "You have a surplus in Ottawa of \$9 billion or so. Don't reduce taxes, please, for the people of Ontario and the rest of Canada. Keep the taxes up high. Give us the money. Give us, the government of the province of Ontario, the money so that we can balance our budget." This is one Liberal cousin saying this to another Liberal cousin, but this Liberal cousin today in this place is attacking equalization.

Good luck when you go to Ottawa and say to Prime Minister Martin and the cabinet in Ottawa and the Liberal members of Parliament from Ontario that you're opposed to equalization. I don't think they'll elect you as a great Canadian at that point. I think they'll wonder about your credentials as a Liberal at that point.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: No, no. The minister responsible for business talks about The Greatest Canadian. No, I'm not voting for Pierre Trudeau. I know that will cause consternation opposite. My children and I were watching and discussing it last night. I will also refrain from voting for T. C. Douglas, great Canadian though he was.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): David Suzuki.

Mr Flaherty: Oh, my goodness, the minister opposite pains me.

My reading of Canadian history, as imperfect as it is, tells me that the greatest Canadian is Sir John A. Macdonald, with the wonderful vision for this country that he had. You know, one of Sir John A. Macdonald's favourite sayings was, "I've had the benefit of looking a little ahead, my friends." I commend that to the Liberal members opposite, including the parliamentary assistant and the Minister of Finance, to look a little ahead in the Ontario economy and look a little bit ahead about what the people of Ontario and small and larger businesses of Ontario can and can't afford.

The parliamentary assistant talks about auto insurance. The promise in the first year was a 10% reduction in auto insurance premiums and 10% the next year. We haven't even got to the first 10%, so there's more broken promises. It isn't something I'd be particularly proud of if I were talking about it as a Liberal member of this place from the Ministry of Finance—more broken promises, particularly in the light of the substantial profits that were quite recently reported in the insurance industry.

As members opposite may know, the insurance industry is largely an investment industry and that when investment times are better, the insurance industry does better, and it is indeed doing better now. I would encourage the member opposite and his government to keep their promise of 10% and 10%, given the current circumstances in the insurance sector.

I also encourage them to address another serious issue in the insurance area, and that is what we're hearing from small businesses across Ontario, particularly businesses that do significant export work with the United States. As

we know, a great deal of our quality of life and standard of living relates to the simple fact that we have about 60 million Americans living within a 24-hour driving distance of where we are now, and that results in us having a very substantial, willing market next door to us with free trade, as a result of a Conservative government in Ottawa, opposed by Liberals in the election in 1988, I guess it was. Free trade has been a boon to the economy of Ontario, certainly southern Ontario, and I encourage the parliamentary assistant and the Minister of Finance to address the issue of insurance costs for small businesses doing transborder work in the province of Ontario, about which, regrettably, we've heard very little.

The Minister of Finance, in his remarks here today, talked about work and a stronger economy and financial health. I say to the minister, with respect, that it doesn't take a lot of imagination and it takes very little work to raise taxes. He has raised taxes at a record-setting pace in Ontario—the largest single tax hike in the history of the province, in respect of which he apparently takes some pride.

Then we come to Bill 149, the bill we're debating today. In this bill we find the cancellation of nine tax credits worth \$85 million. I know the minister likes to say that the cancellation of a tax credit is not a tax increase, just as he and the Premier were fond of saying, for a little while at least, that the new health care tax wasn't a tax. They wanted to call it a premium so that hopefully in people's minds there would be some confusion with the old OHIP premiums that we used to have in the province of Ontario. Of course we are still ruled by law, and when the bill came before the House, the bill to impose the so-called health care premium, it was described as a tax, as it had to be in the bill drafted at the request of the Liberal government of Ontario because it was being deducted at source from income and must be a tax in order to do that.

Pretty soon, I think most of the members opposite, and I think even the Premier and the Minister of Finance, will have given up on this euphemism of calling the new health care tax a premium and now admit, openly, I hope, that it is in fact a tax.

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Similarly, when one cancels a tax credit, the result is that persons affected by the tax credit can no longer claim the credit. Guess what? That means they pay more tax. Now, I know to the Liberals opposite that it might not seem like a tax increase, but a lot of working people in Ontario, when they have to pay more tax one year than the year before, really think it's a tax increase. They know that a higher number means pay more, and that if it's going to the government, it's a tax. I say to the members opposite, to the Minister of Finance and his parliamentary assistant, why don't you call it what it is?

The abolition of a tax credit results in a tax increase for the groups affected. Who's affected? We can start with persons with disabilities. The provincial sales tax rebate on vehicles purchased by those with disabilities is being cancelled by this bill. It's going to be replaced,

apparently, with some kind of income-tested situation, where after someone purchases the vehicle, they can make a claim if their income is below a certain level. I can tell you that my own experience tells me that this will be ineffective to a significant extent for many people who have disabilities. It's a great challenge for many with disabilities to get the money together, quite frankly, to purchase a vehicle in the first place, and the rebate on sales tax was a tremendous benefit for persons needing that kind of vehicle, vehicles which are modified right here in the province of Ontario.

So I say to the government in all sincerity, this is a mistake. If you need more revenue, and you do, then what you ought to be doing is encouraging growth in the economy in the province of Ontario, not increasing taxes, not taking tax credits away from persons with disabilities, which is mean-spirited, quite frankly. But that's one of the tax increases we find in this bill.

The Minister of Finance talks about education and talking to teachers and principals. Interestingly, and in a fascinating way, he speaks not of parents and students, as if education is about teachers and principals and school boards and school buildings. Of course it's not. Parents are responsible for the education of their children. Our four school systems, publicly funded, are supposed to be about students and their parents.

Where did our school system come from? It came from agricultural, rural Ontario, where farmers got together in a certain concession, pooled their resources and built the one-room schoolhouses that we still see in the countryside in Ontario. They hired a teacher using their own resources. The parents of the students were the first school boards.

That's what education is about: parents and students. It's not about big union leaders, big unions, big school boards and the big buildings they build for themselves to have their big offices and their big meetings in. That isn't what it's about.

I encourage the minister, when he thinks about education—the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance—to think more about parents and talk to parents about how their children are doing in our schools and how competitive their educational experience is. After all, we're competing—and there's nothing wrong with that word “competition.” It's the reality of life in Western democracies, at least, and it's a good thing because it encourages effort. We're competing not only with the United States and other Canadian provinces but, increasingly, we're competing with the emerging large countries of Brazil, China and India, with China and India both having in excess of a billion people.

These are serious challenges that we face. We shouldn't be reducing standards. Our government was at pains to increase standards and impose testing, entirely intentionally, because we needed to know how our students were doing in the school system. The government needs to know and parents need to know how their children are doing so that changes can be made to improve performance. Why? So that the children, when

they're older, will be able to compete not only within Canada but internationally, as we move increasingly into a more global economy.

The biggest mistake and the greatest misleading factor is for a young person to graduate or purport to graduate—to be given a paper saying they graduated from a high school—and then have literacy or numeracy problems when they go to seek a job or start their first job. We hear about that time and time again from employers. That's not doing a favour for the young person. Dumbing down our education system, dumbing down our testing system does no favours for young people in the province of Ontario, because they'll find out the reality quickly enough when they get out in the job market. So I say to the Minister of Finance, when he talks about talking to teachers and principals, that he ought to talk somewhat to parents.

The new economy is important. The Ontario research and development challenge fund is important. The government is saying it's abolished or whatever, but it's continuing under another name, the commercialization fund or whatever. The concept there is actually the medical and related sciences, or MARS, concept. At the time, in 2002, when we hosted BIO 2002, I believe we had about 13,000 people from around the globe here. They liked Toronto, they liked the investment and they liked the concept of MARS, medical and related sciences, that we had. Where we are now is part of that process. The whole concept is that with the University of Toronto, our largest research university, right next door to us here; the teaching hospitals of the University of Toronto on University Avenue; the Legislature, the seat of government being right here; and Bay Street, the financial centre not only of Ontario but of Canada, just down the street, the initiators, the innovators will have access, facilitated by government, to resources so that inventions and discoveries can be commercialized here, creating jobs here and creating wealth here, and not elsewhere.

The steps taken by this government, including the steps taken in Bill 149, actually go in the other direction. Taking away tax credits, increasing taxes, increasing the burden on businesses, both small and large, and on individuals in the province of Ontario is exactly the opposite of that MARS initiative. Tax policy is important, and tax policy is the major factor in terms of decision-making with respect to investment—there's lots of authority for that. I say to the members that this government is going in the wrong direction when it thinks it enhances investment in the province and encourages innovation and commercialization of inventions by imposing more taxes on the people.

The minister or the parliamentary assistant talked about eliminating the corporate capital tax by 2012. They speak of this as if it is an accomplishment, a step forward. The beginning of elimination of the capital tax was in the budget in May 2001. I know that because I did that budget in Ontario. That was the beginning of the elimination of the capital tax. In fact, if this government did nothing—but it insists on this Bill 149—the capital tax

would be eliminated in Ontario by 2008, four years earlier than it will be under Bill 149.

I say to the members opposite, like the Hippocratic oath, first, do no harm. If you just do nothing about the capital tax, we'll get rid of it four years earlier in the province. It's a payroll tax, a capital tax, a job-killing tax. It applies whether or not there is profit, which makes no sense in Ontario. We would be better off if they just did nothing about it and we'll get rid of it four years earlier.

During the briefing provided by the ministry last Friday, my staff asked, "What will be the net impact on the province's books as a result of Bill 149?" There's a question you might want to ask the finance minister. They do this big bill and the minister brings it to this House and introduces it: this big bill here, with all this tax legislation in it. You would think, if you asked the Ministry of Finance the question, "What will be the net impact on the province's books as a result of Bill 149?" which we did, you might get a number back. You might even get a range back, because sometimes tax incentives have unforeseen effects in the economy, because we do have an economy out there; this isn't just tax and spend, although the Liberals act like that. Things happen in the economy, depending on tax policy.

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The answer we got from Finance is, "We have no idea." That is to the question: What will be the net impact on the province's books as a result of Bill 149? "We have no idea." That is shocking when you think of fiscal planning, the prudent management of fiscal planning for the province of Ontario.

The government purports now, in Bill 149, not only to cancel the PST rebate on vehicles purchased by those with disabilities, but also to cancel the Ontario home ownership savings plan. Now, there's peculiar action if one wants to grow the economy in the province of Ontario.

There's no doubt we have had a strong new-housing sector in this province. Some would say—some economists did say—that the strong new-housing sector kept the province from sliding into recession a few years ago, when we did have some softness in other important sectors of the Ontario economy. We know now that housing starts are starting to dip. We know that the Royal Bank anticipates about a 2.5% reduction in housing starts this year, and we're now entering the 12th month of the year. We know anecdotally from persons in the housing business that there has been some slowdown in the new-housing business. We know that it's predicted by the Royal Bank that housing starts will be down more than 12% next year.

So let's think about this. If you're the government and you see a slowdown in housing starts, and you know housing starts are a really important segment of the Ontario economy, and your advisers are telling you that were it not for those substantial new-housing starts in the province a few years ago, our economy might well have slid into recession, and if you're interested—as I'm sure the Minister of Finance is—in economic growth, then

why on earth would you take away the biggest incentive there is to new-home buyers to buy a new home?

This has been a remarkably successful program, the Ontario home ownership savings plan. Maybe the minister can't remember a time and maybe never had the experience of buying a first house, where \$1,000 or \$2,000 makes all the difference in the ability to purchase the house or not purchase the house or the condominium in today's market. Maybe he has forgotten that lots of people have to start off somewhere, and that \$1,000 or \$2,000 is a lot of money when you're buying that first property and may even affect your mortgage eligibility and how large a mortgage you can get.

This is foolhardy. This is bad economic policy for the province of Ontario. Bill 149, to abolish the Ontario home ownership savings plan, which has worked so well for so many young people buying their first property, their first residential home or condominium—but there it is. It's a tax increase, in effect, for young people buying their first property in the province.

Bill 149 also cancels the workplace child care tax incentive, the workplace accessibility tax incentive and the 10-year property tax exemption for new electricity generating facilities. The tax incentive for new alternative or renewable electricity supply is also repealed, and that's being done retroactively to November 25, 2002. All of these tax increases are via Bill 149.

We have the treatment of seniors in the bill. It introduces a seniors tax credit that will provide an average of \$125 in benefits to 685,000 seniors. Now, this takes nerve. I heard the minister speaking about it moments ago here, talking about, "We're doing something for seniors." Well, when the Liberal government took office, one of their early actions was to repeal the provision that we had for a seniors tax credit. Now, that provision would have provided an average of \$475 for more than 945,000 senior households. All right, so we have that figure there—\$475 for more than 945,000 senior households—abolished. And now the minister comes to this place and says, "I have progress." He introduces a seniors' tax credit in Bill 149 that will provide an average of \$125 in benefits. So \$125 compared to \$475, for 685,000 seniors compared to 945,000 senior households. Once again, a little challenge with the arithmetic on the part of the Minister of Finance and his parliamentary assistant, if he thinks that's progress for seniors in the province of Ontario. So we have these tax increases—that's not all.

This Bill 149 also makes dramatic changes to the Assessment Act, and this is going to require some further explanation from the minister. The bill alters the manner in which electricity-generating facilities are assessed. Under the act, the minister will have the power to fix assessment rates for these facilities regardless of the current provisions dictated by MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. This is a power now given to the minister without explanation, and apparently without regulatory guidelines. Now, these structures, these electricity-generating facilities, are currently not subject to

assessment for the purpose of property taxes. The concept of adding a tax burden to clean and renewable energy sources makes no sense whatsoever, when the government is trying to attract new investment in these areas. That is water intake structures, for example, at nuclear or hydroelectric generating facilities. So something's up here; I'm not quite sure what it is. I have some suspicions, but I don't know. What we do know is that some substantial assessment changes are proposed in Bill 149 relating to hydroelectric facilities and other electricity-generating facilities, and that will require more examination as this bill is debated in the House.

The bill also increases the employer health tax by increasing the net amount of employee remuneration that is subject to the tax. Under the bill, employee benefits, profit sharing, stock options and salary deferral plans are now all subject to the employer health tax. So way to go once again. The Liberals have demonstrated their insatiable appetite for tax increases—income tax increases—in the province of Ontario. We already have more than 42% of the GDP of this country being taken up by governments, and now we have more steps forward to take even more from the hard-working people of the province of Ontario.

We have the broken promises, certainly. The biggest one, of course, was the pledge not to increase taxes without a referendum, made to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation; and then the current Premier talking in advertising about not raising taxes and not lowering them either—all of that's gone out the window; a huge spending spree by the government of Ontario, more than a \$7-billion spending spree, so that even a casual observer can look at the books of the province of Ontario today and say, "My goodness, the spending this year is going to approach \$80 billion—\$79 to \$80 billion—once the fiscal year is completed." If you look at only three years ago, the spending was about \$65 billion. There is \$15 billion in additional spending over the course of only three years. People would say, "If I get more for it, great." Well, where are the infrastructure projects? What we're seeing is we're not going ahead with Highway 404, we're not going ahead with the 407 east. We're going so slowly, it will be years and years and years before the highway gets built through Durham region to Highways 35 and 115. Where is the new courthouse in Durham region? All they had to do, the minister of infrastructure and the Premier, was to choose one of three qualified proposals. It had been through an RFQ, it had been through an RFP, it had private sector involvement, P3s, no big capital demands on the province of Ontario. Nothing happens. They've been the government now for almost 14 months, and nothing happens. Where are these infrastructure projects? What are people getting in the province of Ontario for paying all these additional taxes?

1620

Well, they are getting—well, no, they are not. I thought they were getting a new deal with physicians. That didn't happen. No, they thought that was going to happen, or at least the Minister of Health and the Premier

thought that was going to happen before the Premier undermined the Minister of Health, but that hasn't happened.

And what are we going to see in this collective bargaining now? Community college professors got an increase of 3.5% or so, I think it was.

Mr Jackson: Four.

Mr Flaherty: Four, was it? Yes, around 4%, the member for Burlington reminds me. And the Minister of Education said in the estimates committee the other day, "We're telling the teachers now that you get 2%, 2.5%, 3%," something like that, going forward. So the Minister of Finance thinks that the teachers, because he says that he has a good attitude, will take something less at the elementary and secondary school level than they took at the community college level. Well, perhaps so, over the course of several years. Perhaps he thought also the physicians were going to take an agreement that they had rejected resoundingly when asked to vote on it. The nurses are going to arbitration in February. So we have challenges on the spending side in the government of Ontario, and we don't see any spending control happening.

You know, Speaker, as anyone who looks at the books in Ontario knows, that on the operating side of government, 80% of the spending is in the nature of transfer payments to spending partners: universities, colleges, long-term-care facilities, school boards, hospitals and so on. And then in that 80%, 70% to 80%, depending on the area, ends up being spent on salaries, benefits, and so on—wages. So it doesn't take a great deal of analysis, and I hope the minister is doing some of this, to say, "OK. If I'm going to control spending in the province of Ontario for the benefit of the people of Ontario, get some control over these spending increases so that I can stop raising taxes every time I bring a bill to this House and so that people have more money in their own pockets so we'll actually grow the economy instead of having less retail sales tax than was anticipated in the budget being paid, a sure sign of taking money out of people's pockets—if we're going to do that, then we have to make sure that we have some spending controls."

How are you going to do that if the wage demands are going to be at 3%, 4%, 5% and 6% in Ontario? Where is the plan? The Minister of Finance comes here in his budget earlier this year and says, "I have a plan"; in his economic statement in the fall of last year, "I have a plan"; in the economic statement in October this year in this place, "I have a plan." What plan? What's your plan to control spending?

He says here today his plan had two or three points: a stronger economy and financial health. That's not a plan; those are goals. It's motherhood. It's platitudes. The plan has to be, "We're going to get some control over spending in Ontario and we're going to stop increasing taxes for the people and businesses of the province of Ontario." But you have to figure out a way to do that. One of the ways you must consider is making sure the spending side is under some measure of control. Other-

wise, we will continue to have this spiralling spending by government, going from \$65 billion to \$80 billion in a matter of a few years. Where will we be three years from now, in 2007, when hopefully there will be an election, if not sooner? We've got to get some control over spending for the sake of economic growth, our standard of living and our quality of life in Ontario, and we don't do it by \$85 million in tax increases, which is what we see in Bill 149.

I do want to share my time with the member for Simcoe North, and I will wind up pretty soon here. But I want to speak a bit, if I may, about productivity. The minister and his parliamentary assistant talk about economic growth, a knowledge economy, research and development. The way you encourage economic growth in those areas is by minimizing the tax burden. One of the major determinants of economic activity is tax policy. This has been said by many. If the government would just read the advice it gets from the committee on the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, if the government would look at the recommendations, it would see not what it's doing, it would see the need to moderate the tax burden; it would see the need to invest in post-secondary education—not in a hard cap for grade school, not in higher salaries for people who work in the system, subject to the rate of inflation or whatever, but on post-secondary education—because we're falling behind our competition, not only in the United States but elsewhere. There are 12 universities being constructed in China as we sit here today in this place. This is urgent.

If we want the standard of living and quality of life for the next generation in Ontario, as Sir John A. Macdonald was fond of saying, "Look a little ahead." You don't do it by \$85 million in tax increases. You don't do it by taking more money out of every paycheque for everybody who works in the province of Ontario, more than six million people, every time they get paid. That's not the way you do it.

So I say, the goal is good, but where's the plan? The plan should be to build infrastructure. The plan should be to invest more in post-secondary education. The plan should be to moderate the tax burden. Then we can encourage aspirations in Ontario and not lose so many people and so much commercialization and investment and reinvestment elsewhere, because we know that tax policy makes a difference in terms of those variables in Ontario.

So I encourage the government to have a look at the informed advice it gets from its own task force; to reflect not just on this year or next year, but to say, "Where are we going to be in the next five, 10 or 15 years in Ontario?" because the decisions that are being made now are vitally important.

Bob Rae, the former Premier, is going to report to the government in late January, I understand, with respect to post-secondary education. I say to the government now, you must plan for his recommendations. Post-secondary education is vitally important, so there must be some

shepherding of resources. Don't come back with more tax increases. Be prudent with spending in other areas of government. Get some control over spending in education, health care and social services, because those are the three areas where most of the money is. Do it now, because next year we're going to need those resources. I don't have a crystal ball, but I expect that at least one of the recommendations is going to be for greater investment in post-secondary education. I encourage the government to prepare for the recommendations that are going to come from Bob Rae's review committee on post-secondary education, which we should see fairly early in the new year, and which can be dealt with in the spring budget by the Minister of Finance. That's important for the young people of Ontario. That's important for our economic future, for our quality of life and for our standard of living as we go forward in Ontario.

So I encourage the minister to anticipate that report and to look at it not just as a report about universities and colleges but as a report that is fundamental to the economic growth of Ontario.

Some 150 or 200 years ago, the centres of economic development were the seaports of the world. That went on for hundreds and hundreds of years—of course, thousands, really. With the advent of the airplane, we saw the importance of airports. Look at the growth in the city of Mississauga and the growth west of the city of Toronto with Pearson airport. Now, the universities and the colleges are the centres of knowledge, the centres of innovation. They are the information ports, the thinking ports, presently and for the future.

So I say that it's incumbent on the government that talks about a knowledge economy, an information society and economic growth to be ready to invest and put some money in that area when the report comes from Mr Rae in the new year. To do that, control has to be exercised in health care, education and social services with respect to the major spending that goes on in those areas, because you can't be all things to all people. When you try to do that, you get this spiralling spending and spiralling taxation which, at the end of the day, is self-defeating, as the Peterson government found out between 1985 and 1990. I encourage the Minister of Finance to reflect on that in anticipation of preparing his budget for the spring of 2005.

1630

Mr Dunlop: I'm very pleased to follow a former finance minister. The member Mr Flaherty actually reduced the provincial debt by, I believe, \$3 billion in the one year he spent as finance minister. He is a very tough act to follow.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: Already I can hear the Minister of Agriculture heckling. If he wants to heckle, I'm going to bring up some points about agriculture a little later on. He won't be very happy when he hears my comments.

This schedule is the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004. There are 38 different amendments in the bill, I believe. For some reason, they call the

very last one the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act when, in fact, there are many, many tax increases as a result of the introduction of this bill. As the minister said, it's part of the larger story following the budget we saw in the provincial Legislature in the spring, probably the most disastrous budget any government has introduced in the history of this province.

One of the things I find very odd about this government is how they try to take credit for things the previous government has done. They mentioned earlier the MARS project, which Minister Flaherty at the time had worked with through the SuperBuild program. In fact, I believe the SuperBuild signs are still on the building. Many of the construction sites you see in downtown Toronto and across the province still hold the SuperBuild signs. They never got around to changing them to the Ministry of Democratic—what is it?—Infrastructure Renewal. Democratic renewal is the pit bull boy's bill. I can tell you, Speaker, that even in this budget they try to take some credit—

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): On a point of order, Speaker: I take offence at what the member just said in reference to the Attorney General of this province, by using a derogatory term to refer to that member in that way. I ask that he apologize to the Attorney General.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I'll just ask members to use parliamentary language, and we'll all listen for that.

Mr Dunlop: Certainly I would never apologize for whatever comment I made about the Attorney General. I happen to believe that the pit bull legislation is the biggest joke—

Hon Mr Peters: On a point of order, Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Let's just get on with the debate, and we'll listen very carefully from here on.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much. Again, I would not apologize for that comment.

Hon Mr Peters: On a point of order, Speaker: The member clearly used derogatory language directed at the Attorney General of this province. The reference he made is language that's not appropriate in this House. He should apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll ask the member, if he feels he should withdraw, to do so. I have heard, though, over the past number of weeks the term "pit bull" used pretty loosely all around this Legislature. Again, I would just ask the member to use parliamentary language.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much.

I just want to talk a little bit about some of the cuts we've actually seen as the result of this government. I want to talk a little bit about my riding. Project Turnaround, 30 jobs, the most successful program for young offenders in the history of the province: gone. No consultation—gone. The Frost Centre, one of the most important educational facilities for people in rural Ontario in the history of our province: cut without any consultation. Of course, Minister Ramsay did it, as usual, when the House wasn't sitting so he wouldn't have to be

accountable for it. That has been a very, very controversial issue, as you know, but it was the way it was done.

Taking Muskoka out of the north, part of this bill: That's an insult to all the taxpayers in the district of Muskoka. It was what I consider to be one of the most mean-spirited attacks on Ernie Eves, because it's something that Ernie Eves put in a budget that was very important to the folks at the Frost Centre.

Again, there's the way this government has treated the deer and elk farmers in the province of Ontario, more recently announcing a regulation that will likely be rubber-stamped by the government. We've seen where the Minister of Agriculture has not come to the support of a very important agricultural commodity in this province.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: The deer and elk farmers have invested millions of dollars in their farming organizations and in their hunt parks. What we have asked for, and what they are asking for, is compensation. The minister has refused it. The Minister of Agriculture, who sits over there heckling today, has come to the side of the Minister of Natural Resources. He will not support—in fact, last week at the OFA breakfast meeting, he ducked questions. You've ducked questions in the House.

Hon Mr Peters: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member should be clear on what he's making comments about. When he's not even at a meeting—the Minister of Agriculture did take questions at the Ontario Federation of Agriculture meeting. Perhaps he should have gone and listened to the farmers first-hand, instead of hiding from the farmers.

Mr Dunlop: At the OFA meeting last Wednesday morning, Mr Todd Grignon, the owner of Universal Game Farm, was the first person to stand at the microphone. He stood 20 minutes before the Minister of Agriculture began to take questions. He completely ignored Mr Grignon, because he will lose hundreds of thousands of dollars as a result of his decisions.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to be able to follow the debate and know that it's about something that someone attended and so forth, but I'm waiting to get on with the stimulating debate.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Speaker, thank you very much. What I refer to is the way this government has treated people who are investing in our province, people who were encouraged to invest in the province. Now we have the Minister of Agriculture, who is with an agricultural group that has been supported by previous governments, including the federal government, and has turned his back on them and won't even answer questions at a meeting that he is intended to answer questions at. That's the point I wanted to get across today. Of course, the big problem with the deer and elk farmers and the hunt parks is that there is absolutely no compensation coming from the government. They'll be out. All of the money that's been invested is now gone. In fact, some of them have taken their money, taken their farms and relocated in other provinces, at millions of dollars of expense.

Mr Speaker, there are other things they have done. They promised to put 1,000 new police officers on the street. That's a \$200-million cost if you put it over the term of the government, over the next three years. What have they done? Mr McGuinty has offered \$30 million toward it. At the same time he has offered \$30 million, he has now taken money away from the police services with the removal of option 4—again, no compensation for the police services or for the municipalities. So again we see how they're treating the public and how they're treating the police services.

What is their game plan? They are coming up with something called a centre for safer communities. I know the PA over there is working on this file, and I have asked the minister what it's about. Where is it going to be located? We already have detachments all over the province; we have fire departments. Why do we need a centre for safer communities when we need money in the police services? Anyhow, we haven't seen any movement in that area.

1640

I want to mention something about the seniors' property tax credit. Today, Mr Colle tried to take credit for this wonderful piece of legislation and how it'll help seniors. This is the same government that removed the seniors' property tax credit that was passed last year. I believe, already, it has taken about \$500 million out of the pockets of seniors in the province of Ontario. That's \$500 million they could have spent on TVs or cars or travelling or just for the improvement of their homes. It's gone, right out of the system.

Of course, the way this current government is handling rural Ontario—Mr Speaker, I don't know how you're finding it in your part of the province, but in my part of the province, in my riding, people are extremely disappointed in the government. People are saying, "Can there be a recall? How do we get rid of McGuinty? When is the next election?" We're hearing that over and over again. Although a lot of people are trying to take credit over there and they think that things are all rosy, I can tell you that that's not the case in rural Ontario.

I want to talk a little bit about the health care system. We all know that the most controversial thing the government has done to date is when they introduced the health tax. Originally called a health premium, now we know it's a health tax. That's costing our seniors and all of our working families up to another \$900 a year. That's certainly not very popular, but the biggest concern is the fact that with the health care tax we're paying more and we seem to be getting a lot less. I was at a couple of functions yesterday, and that was part of the conversation; it came up. Over and over again, people are saying to me, "We seem to be getting a lot less."

Now we're seeing, like last Friday up at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital and Penetanguishene General Hospital, the staff picketing over comments made by the Minister of Health downplaying their role in the health care system, saying that they'd be better off privatized or that we'd get rid of these so-called high-

salaried people that are working in cleaning and in food preparation. Of course, now they're very disappointed. They're just one more group of health care stakeholders who are turning their backs on this government as well.

I refer again to the government taking credit for programs introduced by the previous government. I go back to a comment on page five of the budget speech. It says, "As well, in 2004-05, we'll open an additional 3,760 long-term care beds." That's something that I found very controversial. It's actually hilarious, because I can remember, when today's government was in opposition, that they never gave credit to the government for the 20,000 new long-term-care beds that had been established in the province. Of course, this is the tail end of the 20,000 new long-term-care beds being opened, and now they're taking credit for the 3,760 new beds.

I was happy today to hear my colleague Joe Tascona bring up the cancer care unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie. We really do need to know, with all the additional money that has been included in the health care premium and the additional money the government has received from the federal government, when we will get an announcement in Simcoe county on the cancer care unit for Royal Victoria Hospital. The community is excited about it. They want this building to proceed. It has been on the books for some time. We need an announcement.

I know there's a controversy around Newmarket, at Southlake, and Royal Victoria Hospital, but the bottom line is that this area is growing. It's growing at a dramatic rate. The planning has been accomplished. Last year, the same day I made the announcement at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital to proceed with the construction, Tony Clement came up and gave additional planning dollars at that time for RVH to go to the next stage. We're at that stage, and we have to know what in fact is happening.

I want to get back, for a minute, to some of the other programs that I wanted to bring up here. I wanted to give the government credit for something, and I know we don't often do that. I've said this before and I'll say it again: You followed through on something that we had promised as well, and that was the apprenticeship tax credit. I do give the government credit for putting it forward, because I would have thought they would not do that. So I just wanted to put that on the record. I think, coming from a construction background, that this is a very important direction for the government to go in, and I hope that's something that we can get support from all three parties on as this program goes ahead, along with the federal government as well, because I think they should be part of the package here.

One of the things that has had a large impact on my community was the decision made on September 9 by the Minister of Community and Social Services, and that's the closing down of the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia. I see Mr Hoy over there today. I know his community is impacted, the same as the impact that we may see from Mr Sterling's riding. There are about 1,000 residents of these three remaining facilities. The government

has made a decision to put some kind of plan together to house them in different locations. I just want to say again that these people are very, very severely challenged. I have recently made, I think, three separate tours of the facility up at Orillia, the Huronia Regional Centre, and I look at the facility as being very successful. I don't know how, with the type of housing they have now, we can improve upon that by spending millions of dollars in other areas. I think there is a demand for this type of facility. There are only 1,000 clients left, or 1,000 residents left, in the province of Ontario, but I think when you see the services they have at a centre like the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia, we have to accept the fact that it will take—the government doesn't really have a plan. They just have a planned date for closure.

I really want to put on the record that I think it's a big mistake. I'm working with Huronia Helpers, the parents' organization, and family organizations that support the residents of the Huronia Regional Centre staying in the facility and living out their lives with respect and dignity. We don't know what plan the government really has right now, only that by 2009 the doors will be locked. I find that very difficult to accept at this point, especially after having the opportunity to tour. I would encourage the minister—I know she's been asked by numerous organizations to go up and tour the facility. I would invite her, and put it on the record, to come to Orillia, tour the facility and see the conditions at the Huronia Regional Centre. I think she may have her mind changed by having that invitation.

I'm coming to the end of my time, and I know there are people from the New Democratic Party wanting to speak. But I just want to say that we will not be supporting the bill; that's for sure. I think I have 22 other members who would like to speak to this bill. We consider it a step backwards for the province of Ontario. Again, I do appreciate the opportunity just to share some time today with the member from Whitby-Ajax. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I just wanted to follow up on a comment that was made by the first speaker with respect to essentially the cancellation of the rebate for the tax paid on the purchase of a motor vehicle. As people will know, as a result of that, those people who before were purchasing a vehicle and could get some significant help back will now have to go to the home and vehicle modification program and hope that they might get some assistance. The fact of the matter is, under that particular program, essentially you have to have such a low level of income in order to qualify that many people who would have benefited by the rebate program will now not benefit at all.

1650

I just want to raise the case of a constituent of mine who has been very concerned about this. His name is John Martin. He lives in my hometown of Capreol. He lost his right leg above the knee in December 2002, when he tried to stop a drunk driver from driving away from an

accident scene and, as a result, found himself pinned between two cars and lost up to above the knee of his right leg. He was commenting on the cancellation of this rebate because, although he has a vehicle now that is equipped with a left-foot gas pedal, he made it very clear that because of his disability it would be much easier to get into a van than to try and get into a truck or down into a car. He and his wife are looking at purchasing a mini-van with the expectation of getting some of their costs covered.

His problem is now going to be that while he is on a disability pension, there may be some issues around his wife and whether or not she was working and what income they have, which essentially may disqualify them from participating in the program that the government has now transferred these funds to.

I just say to the government, there are a lot of people who rely on this particular program who have some income but certainly could use the support, and this will affect them a great deal. I think many of them who previously would have qualified will now be absolutely out of luck in terms of getting any support for purchases of vehicles or other modifications.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to make a comment in this round. The member opposite made a comment about the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, as did the Minister of Agriculture himself. I just want to say to members in the House that when the Minister of Agriculture was in Essex and then later in Chatham-Kent Essex, two ridings in the deep south of Ontario, very rich in agricultural production, he sat around in a very informal setting—around a grain bin in one instance; in a machinery shed in another instance—and fielded questions from agriculturalists, from farmers of the community, in a very free-flowing discussion of any topic at all.

We were very pleased, and I know the farm community was pleased, to have a minister just sit down, chat by a grain bin, chat in a machinery shed about the issues of the day—and there was ample time. Sometimes when one attends conventions of all kinds, of all manner, the agenda is not necessarily in the hands of the speaker, whether it be an agriculturalist or someone from the scientific field. Sometimes those agendas just aren't your own and you have to do the best you can. But we certainly appreciated what the Minister of Agriculture stated in our collective ridings in the south.

I think it's important to note in this bill that the apprenticeship training tax is available. I know in our area persons have been talking since 1995 about the need for apprenticeship training, the need for young people and those of any age to move into apprenticeship training. Some 3.3 million Ontarians are baby boomers and are going to be retiring soon. There is a demand for apprenticeship; there has been, for some 10 years. We're addressing that in this bill. I'm so very pleased that movement is coming, because we're going to need those good workers for quality jobs.

Mr Jackson: I'm very pleased to stand in support of the words of my colleagues both from Whitby-Ajax and

Simcoe North, in particular as they relate to the shifting economic fortunes of our province under this new Liberal government.

Clearly, former Finance Minister Jim Flaherty was responsible for reducing the deficit rather significantly in this province, something that a Liberal government has never done in this province's history.

Interjection.

Mr Jackson: It has never done this in the province's history, and you can check it. The one year that you thought you did it, I recall very vividly. It was one of Bob Nixon's greatest sleight-of-hand tricks of the century. He delayed the transfer of half a billion dollars to the Ontario teachers' fund by exactly two seconds and threw it into the next fiscal year. That allowed him, on paper, to balance his books, until the auditor got hold of it after the election. Now, the election didn't work very well for the Liberals at that time, but the auditor certainly set the record straight and left Floyd Laughren with an excellent political opportunity that was handed to him once he took over as the first NDP finance minister.

The members opposite will have many Hansard records of them bragging about balancing the books, but they paid \$70 million in bonus money to the teachers' pension fund, and I think the interest worked out to \$3 million or \$4 million for delaying it by 24 hours, but the money got into their account the very next day. It was a brilliant sleight of hand on the part of Bob Nixon and the Liberals. So I stand by my statement that they have not, in the few times the citizens of Ontario have elected a Liberal Premier, had one who actually knew how to balance the books without employing the sleight of hand tricks that Bob Nixon did.

Mr Prue: It is my privilege to comment on the two speakers, the first from Whitby-Ajax and the second from Simcoe North. There was a very wide-ranging discussion. I think I heard about more bills than one could possibly imagine and more problems than one could envisage in this province. You know, they talked about all things economic, the full range. We heard about the Huronia Regional Centre, we heard about elk farming, we heard about disability vehicles, we heard about everything. But I really want to comment about the two speakers, because they come from very different planes and talked about very different things. The first speaker, from Whitby-Ajax, talked about the need to cut programs, the need to be fiscally responsible, the need to save even more money, the need not to raise taxes. He was right on point for most of his 40 minutes. On the other hand, I think the second speaker came from the other tradition of Progressive Conservatives, if you still call yourselves that, because he was far more progressive. He talked about the need to compensate farmers, the need to compensate elk farmers, the need to spend money in the Huronia—

Mr Dunlop: Regional Centre

Mr Prue: —Regional Centre because that centre is of such primary importance to the families and people who live there.

The first member talked about cutting back in schools and in hospitals; the second member talked about the needs of the Huronia centre, about apprenticeships and all manner of things. Really, I think this is a problem that must be addressed by the government. I would imagine that same kind of feeling exists on that side of the House, where you are torn between whether you should cost cut—and you are cutting some 15 ministries by an average of 12%—or whether you must raise taxes to do those things you promised in the election. It is something I'm hoping for you to be much more clear on as we debate this bill, because at this point it is still unclear to me where you are going, there are so many cost cuts in here and so very few increases for ordinary people.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to respond.

Mr Dunlop: I want to thank the members from Beaches-East York, Burlington, Nickel Belt and Chatham-Kent Essex for their comments on our leadoff hour by myself and Mr Flaherty. To the member from Beaches-East York, yes, we probably have different outlooks on a lot of different areas, but what I have to say about my colleague from Whitby-Ajax is that I have so much respect for his abilities in finance and his expertise and background as a lawyer that I like to work with him and I like to hear what he has to say on many of these different topics. I'm excited by the fact that he is able to talk for so long with so many great points each time.

The member from Burlington mentioned a little bit about some of the tax cuts as well. Mr Jackson has been in the House for a long time and has a lot of respect here, and we're happy to see that something he had a start on, the ODA, has gone ahead as well. I think that's a bill that most of us in this House are supporting.

The member from Chatham-Kent Essex—he's not here; oh yes, he is—mentioned something in his talk about the Minister of Agriculture going down to some round tables or sitting beside a grain bin in his farming community. I've invited the minister up to the Universal Game Farm, the very farm that will probably be put out of business because of a regulation that the Ministry of Natural Resources is putting through. I've been denied that request: Neither the Minister of Natural Resources nor the Minister of Agriculture will go up to talk to the person they are actually going to put out of business, and that's a sad day in this province. This young guy has invested literally millions of dollars in this operation, and it is just disgusting to see the way he's been treated by this government.

1700

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Prue: It is indeed my privilege and honour to give the leadoff for the New Democratic Party.

This is a complex bill. It is a thick bill. It was given to us barely a week ago now to take a look at for the first time. The actual date was November 22, today being one week later.

We have a bill here which is an omnibus bill. I have to tell people who are watching on television that you have

no idea of the size of this bill and the scope of what this bill is purporting to do until you actually have a chance to delve into it. It changes 40 government acts and regulations.

I'd just like to go through some of them to show the people who may be watching this—if they don't fall asleep—what this is changing. This is changing the Administration of Justice Act, the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act, the Assessment Act, the Business Corporations Act, the Capital Investment Plan Act, the Commodity Futures Act, the Community Small Business Investment Funds Act, the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Corporations Tax Act. It is changing the Education Act. It is changing the Electricity Act, the Employer Health Tax Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, the Fuel Tax Act, the Gasoline Tax Act, the GO Transit Act, the Highway Traffic Act, the Income Tax Act, the Insurance Act, the Land Transfer Tax Act, the Limitations Act, the Loan and Trust Corporations Act, the Ministry of Revenue Act, the Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act, the Municipal Act, 2001, the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act, the Northern Services Boards Act, the Ontario Home Ownership Savings Plan Act, the Ontario Municipal Economic Infrastructure Financing Authority Act, the Pension Benefits Act, the Province of Ontario Savings Office Privatization Act, 2002, and the Retail Sales Tax Act. It is changing the Securities Act. It is changing the Tax Terminology Harmonization Act, 2004, the Tobacco Tax Act, the Treasury Board Act, the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004, and perhaps some more that I have missed.

We have had this document for only a week. When I commented on it a week ago, when the opposition members were given five minutes, I stated at that time that it was important to delve into this to see what other little horrors might be found. Well, I think that we have found a few, and I would like to bring those up today.

Before I do that, I'd just like to put this all in context. The act itself is called An Act to implement 2004 Budget measures, enact the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004 and amend various Acts. So before we can go into what Bill 149 purports to do, I think it's more important to review what has happened in this province since the advent of this new government.

Last spring, there was lots of hope and promise and lots of people thinking that we had turned a corner, that there might be changes after eight years of what can only be described as some very regressive legislation and financing by many people in this province. People were looking for change. In fact, I'm disappointed to say at this time that not much really has changed.

In that budget, we started off with an unfair health tax, that tax which takes money from people who can ill afford it to pay for their health needs. No one would deny, even for a second—certainly not me—that money needs to be spent on health. No one would deny—especially not me—that we need \$2 billion, \$3 billion or

\$4 billion to set right-side-up the health system which had started to deteriorate in this province. But what this government chose to do at that time was to tax those who could least afford to pay for it. Instead of taking the money from those who were well off or from corporations, they chose to take it from ordinary people, often those who lived in poverty; take money that they could ill afford from themselves, from their families, from their children. That unfair health tax kicks in for people making about \$22,000 a year. If one uses the low-income cut-off figures for the province of Ontario for large cities like Ottawa, Hamilton or Toronto, one will know that for a single parent with one or two children, their health tax kicks in when they earn above \$22,000. For them to be above the poverty limit, a single parent with one child needs to earn \$25,000 a year. So although they are living in poverty, this government has chosen to tax them.

We also have the case of families who are living in poverty. A single wage-earner—and let's make it the mother; we have stay-at-home dads these days. A single mother out there working and earning \$30,000 a year, a stay-at-home father, a couple of kids—that family of four requires \$35,000 to live above the poverty line. Yet if the single wage-earner is earning \$30,000, they are already into the secondary bracket; they're already having to pay \$600 against the health tax. They are living in poverty. This government is choosing to take those people in poverty and tax them, which they can ill afford. It is probably the single most regressive feature of this government in its very short mandate of just over a year.

That is not the only one, though. We have also seen what else they have done in terms of the budget for which this bill is going to dovetail. My comments, if you will allow me, will dovetail in short order.

They also introduced the hydro shuffle, which took \$3.9 billion off the books in order that they were seen to have only a \$2.2-billion deficit. That works for one year, but will not work next year.

They chose to reduce by some 12% the monies that were given to 15 ministries. The average of 12% reduction is going to be seen in agricultural programs, in environmental programs and in many ministries across the full breadth of Ontario. They have chosen to make that reduction.

They have chosen to increase licence fees, everything from my fishing licence—which you'll be pleased to know, Mr Speaker, I renewed today, because it's due and I really need a chance to go back out there and hope to catch some fish next year, for a change—but they increased the licensing fees for drivers' licences and every other type of licence in the province, something that consumers will soon see when those licences are being renewed.

They chose to delist services, everything from chiropractors to optometrists to physiotherapists, that people have come to rely on. In fact, it was the greatest privatization of health care services in this province since those services were made public back in the 1960s.

They have chosen, and wilfully chosen, to not honour their election commitment to end the clawback of the child care subsidies that are given by the federal government. In fact, they continue the clawback, which is probably the single greatest cause of children living in poverty in this country. If you want to eliminate child poverty, which I think is every party's goal—or at least they say so—the easiest, the most effective way that can be done is to end the clawback. This was promised by them during the last election but was not delivered. All that has happened is they have limited the clawback that will not be taken from some of the very poor and destitute families of this province by limiting it to an \$89 return on what they might get, as opposed to the \$2,800 they had promised during the last election.

They promised to institute a whole program of child care reforms—some \$300 million. I'm pleased to see that the minister is here in the House, because I have yet to hear of a single expenditure, a single amount of money that is actually going to be spent, other than pilot projects, other than waiting for two or three or 15 years, and we haven't heard the numbers for it to come together. That promise did not see the light of day in the budget.

We have seen a whole bunch of education benchmarks.

We have seen the problem with housing, the problem that this government ran on a platform of increasing housing, and yet only some \$18 million will be spent in this fiscal year. We have promises of things and shovels in the ground for other housing, but it's pretty small potatoes. It is looking like it's going to be far, far less than what was promised, at 20,000 housing units over the four years of this government's mandate.

1710

There was a big announcement about shelter allowances, prior to the election, of some \$100 million for low-income families, but none of that was contained in the budget. We did see last week a pilot project, I believe at the enormous cost of \$1.6 million, for the city of Toronto. That's a pilot project to see how it works and, I suppose, to absolve the government of its commitment for \$100 million. It is going to benefit only some 400 families in the immediate Toronto area. It is hardly going to make a dent in those families who are 70,000-plus on a waiting list for assisted housing in Toronto.

We also have the famed sewer tax, because that's where some of the money went from all of those monies for health.

That's what we ran into last spring. We were looking for a lot of great things, but what we ran into was a budget which, in my view, was kind of disastrous to the people of Ontario who were actually seeking change, who did not like the spiralling down of their lifestyle in the eight previous years of the Conservative government. Now, not everyone spiralled down in those eight years. Lots of corporations made lots more money. Lots of very wealthy people didn't have to pay the surtax that kicked in at \$100,000, or the double surtax that kicked in at

\$150,000. But ordinary and lower- and modest-income people certainly saw their lifestyle deteriorate and were hoping for some pretty good things to happen in last spring's budget.

They did not see that. They saw instead that their quality of life has not been enhanced. In fact, in many regards, because they're having to pay for health tax, because they're having to pay more for licences, because they're having to pay more for hydro, where the caps have been taken off, because they're having to pay now for delisted services, because they're not getting money that they expected from the clawback on what the federal government gives them for having children, because there's no housing being built, because they're not getting shelter allowances, they are finding that the quality of their life is being eroded.

This brings me to what we have here before us. We have here a bill which is changing some 40 different government acts, which is thick, which is ponderous, which is difficult to understand. I must admit, even though I had a one-hour briefing, I was not much more enlightened after the one hour than when I went into it, because there are so many bills and so many changes being contemplated, some of which are minuscule, some of which are meaningless to the average person, some of which I think even a tax lawyer would have difficulty in understanding.

I asked, a bit in jest, the PA to the Minister of Finance earlier today if he could explain the change to the Electricity Act in schedule 11, changing the Electricity Act, because this is what it says: New subsections 94(7) and (7.1) and amendments to the regulation-making authority in subsection 96(1) deal with this cascading effect by providing regulation-making authority for the refund of the transfer tax where the proceeds of a transfer are reinvested in a manner prescribed in the regulations.

It's pretty poor English, and it's pretty good gobbledegook, because that is meaningless to anyone. No matter what question one might ask—"What does that mean?"—I don't believe there is possibly an answer. We delved through this and spent about an hour asking what I thought were some probing questions, trying to determine where this government is heading with Bill 149, how it's going to dovetail with the budget announcements that have been made to date. I can tell you, there are six areas that I believe are wrong-headed. There are six things contained in this budget bill, Bill 149, that I think government members, if you are not aware—and I would surmise that some of you may not be, unless you've also had at least one hour sitting down there with senior bureaucrats.

The first one that causes me some great concern is the elimination of the capital tax. I heard the member for Whitby-Ajax say that this was a heinous thing that the Liberals are doing, because he would do it earlier. He would do it by 2008, and you're going to take all the way to 2012 to accomplish the same goal. I would suggest to you that you're just Conservatives who are a little slow. They used to say that New Democrats were Liberals in a hurry. Well, I'm going to say that you are now Con-

servatives who are a little slow, because your plan is exactly the same as their plan.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: Physically only.

Your plan is exactly the same. If you look back to what you said in the last election, it is 180 degrees diametrically opposed to the plan that you ran on. You said you were not going to eliminate the capital tax. But instead, today, you are choosing to do exactly that. You are choosing to eliminate a tax which could potentially bring in a great deal of money. You are going to reward corporations that, I would suggest to you, are already making enough money. This tax is levied on paid-up capital of large corporations. It brings in approximately \$1 billion in revenue per year to the province. It is far from a job-buster, as has been suggested by the official opposition. It is, in fact, an amount of money which large corporations count on, large corporations know they have to pay and large corporations can afford to pay.

Who is the main beneficiary? Some people over there might think it's General Motors; some people over there might think it's farm corporations; some people might think it's a myriad of manufacturing companies that we have in this country—maybe even Stelco from Hamilton. But you would all be quite mistaken. Who pays the lion's share of this capital tax? Two groups: number one, the banks; number two, the insurance companies. Between them, they pay almost half the capital tax. When you eliminate the capital tax, you are eliminating the taxes that come from banks and insurance companies.

How was their year last year? Pretty good, I think. How has their year been? How much profit have they made? One only has to go to the quarterly profits of what is called the six sisters—the six largest banks in this country—to see that every year their profits increase, and increase by large amounts. They are running into the billions of dollars in profit each and every year in this country. They have worldwide investments; the markets are good; they are making money hand over fist. They are making money in so many ways.

If you are an ordinary person going into the bank, they will charge you for literally everything. They charge you for having a bank book now. I hope people watching this realize that you're charged for having a bank book unless you have a minimum of a \$1,000 deposit in there. You are charged for every transaction you make, you are charged if you go to one of the automated tellers, you are charged if you have an overdraft, you are charged, you are charged, you are charged, and their profits are enormous. This is who this government wants to reward.

By reducing the capital tax on banks, you are going to give them a further windfall of approximately a quarter of a billion dollars. I ask you, do you think in your own mind that they need the money, or do poor children need the money? Do they need the money, or do daycares need the money? Do they need the money, or does the education system or hospitals need the money? Quite frankly, I think they make enough. Quite frankly, I think they're well off. Quite frankly, I think we would not be

doing them any harm whatsoever if we were to require that they continue paying those taxes.

The second large group, which earns almost as much as the banks, or pays almost as much as the banks, off capital tax, is the insurance companies. This past week we saw insurance company profits and how much they have gone up in this past year.

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When this Parliament was first called, a lot of the debate was around automobile insurance. The insurance companies were all crying about how much money they didn't have, how they were losing, how they couldn't afford to stay in the insurance game: "Oh, woe is me." But the reality is that, even then, everything was on the upswing. Even then, they were recording profits. Even then, they were making a lot of money.

Today, we can see that that industry is making about \$1 billion in profit—just in Ontario, I believe. These are the same people about whom you now want to say, with all the profits they're making, with all that they're doing, "Let's give them a tax windfall. Let's give away a quarter of a billion dollars, which we need for hospitals and schools, to them."

I'm telling you, I think this is a huge mistake, but that's what you're doing in Bill 149. You are embarking on a program of revenue loss that will escalate over the years, between now and 2012. This year is pretty small. This year is only \$1 million, because you're planning to do it now and it only kicks in in December. So you're going to lose about \$1 million for the fiscal year 2004-05. That ups to \$40 million in 2005-06 and \$110 million in the year 2006-07. This is about the time that we expect an election to be called. Up to that point, we're looking at a loss of about \$150 million until March 2007, with incremental amounts each year until it escalates to the full \$1 billion by 2012.

I would suggest to the government that if you are serious about your other stated goals, if you feel ill at ease because you have not been able to end the child clawback or put the money that you promised into the hospitals or the schools, if you feel ill at ease that people on ODSP are getting a 3% raise or that you can only have the minimum wage increased to \$8 over a number of years, then you should also feel ill at ease that you are giving away money that large corporations quite clearly can afford.

The second item that we find in this legislation is ending the PST on handicapped drivers and their families. That is found in schedule 33, if I could just read it, because I think they say it as succinctly as I ever could:

"Clause 48(3)(k) of the act currently permits the Minister of Finance to make regulations providing for a rebate or partial rebate of tax paid on the purchase of a motor vehicle to transport a physically disabled person. The re-enactment of the clause provides that this rebate is available if the motor vehicle is purchased or ordered on or before May 18, 2004 and delivered before August 1, 2004."

As announced in the Ontario budget of May 18, 2004, as a more effective way of delivering assistance to persons with physical disabilities, increased funding is provided to the home and vehicle modification program funded through Ministry of Community and Social Services. This once and for all ends a rebate which was started in last spring's budget statement. Regular watchers of question period might have remarked or seen that this question was raised by me four times in question period, first to the Minister of Finance and then three times to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

The case at hand in all of those was a young family from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell who had written first of all to their MPP and latterly to me as the critic for community and social services, trying to find out why a rebate that they were in the process of applying for had been cancelled. Quite clearly, that rebate program continued to be on the Web site of the government of Ontario. It was on the Web site right until approximately the end of September or the beginning of October of this year, even though the budget measures had in fact cancelled it. I believe that may have been the case, in part, because this Bill 149 is finally doing the closure, the final deed, that allowed the government's actions to be legal.

In fact, the Chenier family, when they applied for the rebate, did so in order to accommodate the needs of their disabled child. That child needs help with accommodation inside a vehicle, to get to the many medical and other programs that are available in the Glengarry-Prescott-Russell area.

The Minister of Community and Social Services questioned my motive many times for asking that, and I have to tell you I was taken aback at the claims that it was my staff not providing sufficient information; that I was somehow to blame for trying to advocate on behalf of this family and other families like them. The reality is, none of that was correct.

I am pleased to say, and state on the record, that the Chenier family has now been found to be eligible by the same minister who was denying it up until that stage, and is being processed. He has written to my office, and I believe to the minister's office, to thank everyone for accommodating the special needs, and the fact that the government of Ontario had not done what was appropriate in order to cut that program off. Whatever was left out there I assure you is now being taken care of by schedule 33.

The monies being made available to the March of Dimes, of course, is a good thing. I am confident that that wonderful organization, which has its headquarters for Ontario in East York, will spend the money wisely and will ensure that those persons who get the monies are deserving of it.

However, it is means tested. That means only the poorest of the poor are going to be able to get the rebate. I don't know how many of those people will be able to outfit their homes or their cars with the special devices that are needed, because many of those people who will fall into that category quite simply do not own homes and

do not have cars. In any event, who is being left out is a whole swath of ordinary Ontarians: people with disabilities, people who through no fault of their own have found themselves disabled at some point in their lives.

I got a very sad letter the other day. I was carbon-copied on a letter that had been sent to the member for Peterborough from one of his constituents, quite irate at the cancellation of this program and at the details found in Bill 149 to do away with it once and for all. You see, he suffers from multiple sclerosis. It is a debilitating disease that, over years, has sapped his strength, his ability to work, his ability to get around. He writes quite clearly that he is not a poor man, nor is he a rich one; he simply requires some assistance in order to continue functioning at some level in his daily life. He is very disappointed at the government actions in this bill and what it is going to do.

You heard my colleague the member from Nickel Belt talk about a gentleman in her riding and how this same program is being taken away from him.

This portion of the bill, this schedule 33, is going to hurt many, many people; perhaps not the poorest of the poor, but it is going to hurt modest- and middle-income families who rely upon government assistance.

This is the same government that has brought forward an Ontarians with disabilities bill, ostensibly to help those with disabilities fit better and contribute more to Ontario. While putting in that bill, at the same time you are taking away, through finance, the ability of many of those people to function, to get around, to live in their own homes, to drive, to get to medical attention.

I would suggest that this is a wrong provision of this bill. I would suggest that it needs to be removed. I would suggest that if you are serious about helping families and people with disabilities, this provision shouldn't be left in.

1730

A third problem I have with this bill—and I'm trying to be mindful of the time—is the PST rebate for energy efficiency. We all pride ourselves on being energy-conscious these days, an energy consciousness that comes with the blackout we had, with brownouts that were threatened, with the understanding that energy costs are starting to escalate and that those at the bottom levels are starting to have some very real problems financing the simple turning on of television sets or refrigerators or machines that are required to keep them healthy and alive, everything from kidney dialysis machines to oxygen tents. Everything in this modern world requires electricity.

This bill does one good thing. I'm going to comment on what I think it does well—it does—and congratulate you for that provision. It allows wind and solar and micro-hydroelectric and geothermal units being built to be PST-exempt. Good idea—I'm not going to say for a minute that it's not a good idea. But with the same hand, it takes away the provincial sales tax that was granted to ordinary people for buying energy-efficient appliances. That died in July 2004. That was not renewed, and it is

not renewed specifically under this bill. It is being allowed to die.

People who had energy-inefficient appliances—old clunker refrigerators, old stoves that don't contain the heat, old machinery—used to be able to get a PST rebate if they went in and bought modern machinery that would allow the consumption of electricity to go down dramatically within their own homes, machinery that would allow them to have lower hydro bills, and machinery, most importantly, that would allow the government to stop its reliance on these megaprojects, spending billions at Pickering. If you can take down consumption, you can solve some of the hydro dilemma.

This ordinary process has been taken away under Bill 149. It has been taken away, I think, to the detriment of an energy efficiency that we in this province need to have, an energy efficiency that I hear members on all sides of the House talk about day in and day out, an energy efficiency we need to have if we are to remain strong and competitive and are not going to have to rely on foreign or outside sources of electrical power. This specific bill takes away the PST rebate for energy-efficient appliances retroactive to last July.

The fourth item, again, is an interesting one. There are some changes to the Securities Act. One change that is made is a good one, and again, I commend the good one. But the finance committee, which sat for many, many days over the course of several months listening to deputants from across Ontario, made 14 recommendations to the minister of the treasury board. The 14 recommendations were wide-ranging.

The one that is contained in this bill is an important one. It is the extension of civil liability in the case of misrepresentations in secondary trades under the Securities Act. That's a whole mouthful, but what that means in a nutshell is that people who are ripping off consumers, trading in shady deals on the secondary market, which is about 85% or 90% of the total market, now have an extension of civil liability so they can be sued, so that people can try to recoup some of the monies that may have been purloined. But I would suggest that that's the only thing that's contained.

Everything else that was recommended by the committee and everything else that the minister of the treasury board said he was going to follow up with is not contained in this bill. I don't know whether it's coming later. He hasn't spoken, so I don't know. And if it's coming later, then when, because it's vitally important. Or if this is the only aspect of the bill that's going to be made into law, quite simply, it is not enough.

The things that are silent include separating the adjudicative function from the policy and investigation function of the OSC. I think it is absolutely important to the well-functioning of our stock exchange and the Ontario Securities Commission to have a process whereby people who feel they have been wronged or swindled in the stock market have someone to whom they can go, who they believe is a separate adjudicator, who is not going to be bound by either the policy decisions of the

securities commission or of the investigations branch of that same commission. It was certainly the key recommendation of former Justice Coulter Osborne, which he put before the committee and before the minister of the treasury board, and it is not contained here. I believe, absolutely, if change had taken place, that was the change that should have taken place first. Although I do not deny the other one is important, that one is glaring in that it is not there.

The second problem we see is the direct order for restitution. The committee unanimously recommended that the OSC be given authority to direct order for restitution for people who, in many cases, would be cheated out of most, if not all, of their life savings. We heard story after story from ordinary individuals about how they had been cheated out of their life savings. In fact, the OSC's own figures show that there are approximately 260 infractions investigated and carried out per year, investigations leading to hearings and/or charges and/or criminal charges every year. That would be about one a day while the stock exchange is open. That would be every day someone is cheated out of some money that they actually can catch.

I want you to put that into perspective. I don't think that the Bay store at Queen and Yonge in Toronto catches one shoplifter a day, but at least one person is swindling people out of hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not more, every day on the stock exchange, and there is no direct order for restitution contained in this bill.

There is also nothing in this bill concerning the conflicts of interest that exist in some of the parties doing business within the OSC and the stock exchange, the self-regulating agencies such as the IDA or the Mutual Fund Dealers Association. Both of these groups do advocacy work and discipline work. I would think they do far more advocacy work on saying how good they are than on discipline against the members who breach the line or the etiquette, or whatever one wants to call the daily transactions in funds.

The Securities Act is an important piece of legislation that needs a very large overhaul. There were 14 recommendations made to the minister, and all we see in this bill is one recommendation. Although we welcome that—and I see the Chairman of the finance committee is here now, and I hope I can speak for you as well—we hope that all of our 14 recommendations make it into law. I am disappointed to see that only one is contained within this bill that we have here today.

The fifth problem I have is with schedule 9, which is the phase-out of programs which have perhaps not served Ontario as well as they could have. Schedule 9 sets out those items that are being phased out, and they're being phased out under the Corporations Tax Act again. This, I would suggest, is a mistake. They do not cost the government a lot of money. In fact, in his opening statement, the Minister of Finance said that it's only in the millions of dollars—a couple of million, \$2 million, \$3 million, \$5 million; I forget the figure he used—that were actually being spent from government coffers to corporations, to

businesses that wanted to make use of these particular acts.

1740

Look at what's being phased out. I ask the members opposite, is this the kind of government you want to be? You are phasing out—in the Corporations Tax Act, subsections 5(6) and (7), the workplace child care tax incentive and workplace accessibility tax incentive apply to expenditures made before January 1, 2005. So if they haven't made the expenditures by the end of this year, which is now only a matter of some four and a half weeks away, they will no longer be eligible for that.

What does the child care tax incentive do? What does the accessibility tax incentive do? These are two relatively small programs that corporations, companies, have come to rely on if they are progressive. If they, as a company, want to have a child care facility on-site and want to set it up, much as the city of Toronto has at Metro Hall or at city hall, or any number of large corporations may have, so that the parents can bring their children to work with them, put them in a secure environment and take them home at the end of the workday—if a corporation is that progressive and wants to do that for the benefit of their employees and for the benefit of the children of those employees, they used to be able to get a tax credit. But Bill 149 is going to ensure that they no longer get that tax credit.

If you believe that there are corporations out there that are progressive, there are companies out there that are progressive, that they want to have on-site child care facilities available, and if you believe those are good things, not bad things, then why would you vote for this particular section of this bill? This is only going to save the government, by the minister's own recollection, a couple of million dollars a year. But it's going to ensure that corporations no longer see that incentive and no longer want to build the very child care centres we need. We need thousands, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of additional child care facilities across this province. This, in a small way, is going to do away with some of them.

At the same time, those same provisions—subsections 5(6) and (7)—are going to phase out the workplace accessibility tax incentive. This is an incentive, again, for progressive employers who want to have a workplace incentive for people who are disabled. We have the Ontarians with Disabilities Act before this Legislature, which supposedly is going to help people who are disabled. We, as a province, I hope, want to do everything we can to redress the wrongs that have been done to people who, through no fault of their own, are infirm, people who are disabled, whether that disability be mobility disabled or blindness or deafness or whatever it is. We want to do the best we can to assist these people, and some corporations do as well. Some corporations have been able to make wonderful accommodations for people who are disabled.

For many years, when I worked in the immigration department, we had a court reporter, just as we have a

court reporter here in Hansard, who typed into a remarkable machine and then later used a mask. She was totally, completely blind, and had been so since birth. She was able to accommodate that because there were people who were compassionate enough, people who were willing to give her the extra time it took to transcribe the materials, to type them up. She had readers, because occasionally, even with her brilliant 100-words-a-minute typing, she would make mistakes—people who were able to correct those mistakes. She was a tremendous court reporter. There was a program in place by the federal government that allowed that remarkable woman to come to work every day. She was the sole support of her family. I worked with her for many years.

There have to be people like this in the private sector. There have to be people who could go to work if only there were an elevator to get them upstairs, if they were in a wheelchair; people who could go to work and do court reporting services, if only there were a Braille machine; people who could go to work if there were some kind of infrared so they could hear better, if they are hearing-impaired; people who could go to work and who could contribute. There are companies, I am sure, that would want to hire them. But what this bill does, quite frankly, I think, is wrong. It is totally misplaced. It says that the workplace accessibility tax incentive is phased out on January 1, 2005. Is this the legacy this government wants to leave? I would hope not, and I would hope each and every member of the government will make sure that this is not part of this bill when it comes back for third reading.

We have another phase-out: subsection 5(8), phase-out of the educational technology tax incentive as of January 1, 2005. This is educational technology, and it is supposedly being replaced by something else. This is an opportunity for companies to invest in people who have new technological experience, who would go to work for them and who would help them to develop technology so that they can keep abreast of huge changes that are happening in software and every other type of technology. This is being taken out. This is only a cost of \$1 million or \$2 million to the taxpayer per year. I don't want to sound like Bud Drury, like, "What's a million?" but I do want to tell you that for \$1 million, you're going to reap many more benefits if progressive companies can make use of those people, can spend the money wisely, find technological innovation, and help people get the education to do it. This particular bill will phase out that technology incentive on January 1, 2005.

From that same bill, subsection 7(2) of the Corporations Tax Act, is the repeal of the tax incentive for new electricity supply as of November 26, 2002. That's going back two years. I have no idea why this is being done. Perhaps somebody on the opposite side can inform me or tell me why this is a good idea, to phase out retroactively, two years ago, a tax incentive for new electricity supply. Is it because you're going somewhere else? Is it because you're privatizing? I have no idea what this is for, quite frankly, nor were the bureaucrats able to elucidate much on this provision at all.

Then we go, of course, down to sections 30 to 34, which is the elimination of the capital tax. I've already talked about that a little earlier, but just to read what that's going to do, the elimination of the capital tax starting in 2005, deduction from taxable capital is increased by \$2.5 million each year until it reaches a maximum of \$15 million in 2008. Starting in 2009, capital tax rates are reduced each year until capital tax is eliminated in 2012.

This is money you need. This is your bill. These are people you are trying to help. I would suggest to all of you that the corporations to which you are attempting to give the largesse—it's much better to give them the money, if you're going to give them some money, to assist the disabled, to assist the poor, to assist women and men who have children in daycare than it is to simply give them an outright tax break in companies primarily—as I said before, banks and insurance companies—that probably don't need it.

I have about 10 minutes left. I'm going to speak about this because we're getting into the insurance companies again. Primarily because the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance spent most of his time talking about auto insurance, I felt compelled to at least rebut a little bit of what was being said.

This has been one of those very sad cases where people expected so much and are receiving so little. They were promised, during the heat of the campaign, that there would be a 10% reduction in their auto insurance premiums. I have to tell you, Mr Speaker, I do not believe for a moment that this has happened. In this House, the Minister of Finance has stood up and said "10%" at one point, and then lowered that to around 7.5% when most of the companies were in. I would suggest that most of that is quite illusory. We started out by looking at those companies, the 55% or so, which could probably lower the rates fastest, but then when the rest of them came in, we had the whole problem.

1750

People in Ontario are paying very high rates. All of us in this room are probably paying pretty high rates for driving. Even with spotless records, you're going to find that insurance costs continue to escalate. In the year 2002, there was a 20% increase in the cost to average Ontario drivers. In the year 2003, there was a further 25% increase to average Ontario drivers, and in the first quarter of 2004—that's just the first quarter—there was an additional 8% to Ontario drivers.

We were told to wait for the decreases that would come toward the end of the year. We were told that the insurance companies, which are now making scads of money, close to a billion dollars in profit this year, would start to lower the rates.

I looked in eager anticipation at my insurance bill, which I got two weeks ago from an insurance company I have been with for many years. When I got the bill, I opened it up, expecting to see the 7%, 8%, 10%, 12% reduction, which I had been promised so many times in this House.

I should preface my remarks: I have no speeding tickets; I have just an ordinary car; I have a seven-star rating; and I drive less than 18,000 kilometres a year. I opened it up, and what did it say? It said that I got a 5% increase. Hmm. I was a little curious and more than a little miffed, so I phoned the 1-800 number and talked to very nice man, who explained clearly to me that no, whoever said that there was a 10% was—and I can't use the word, because it's unparliamentary. He said that wasn't the case at all. In fact, the company I had been with for many years and which used to give me a fairly good rate, I must say, said that they had been given authorization for increases up to 31% this year. I was lucky; because I had what he considered to be a near-perfect driving record, mine was only going to be a 5% increase.

Mr Jackson: Did you thank him?

Mr Prue: No, I did not thank him. I told him I was sorry but, after all these years, I was going to shop around. I did, and I found somebody who actually will give me a very slight reduction.

There are many people who do not have that luxury. There are many people who have had a ticket in the last year or two. There are many people who've had a fender-bender. There are many people who simply do not know how to do that. They've been with one company year after year.

The reality is that what you promised to give them is not being delivered. Unless they know a broker, which I knew, and phone them up, unless you know all of that stuff and how to go about it, you're going to find out that the reality of the insurance game is that you're going to get an increase.

Ms Martel: What about the government promise?

Mr Prue: The promise that was made to me in this House—and, I'm sure, to 12 million Ontarians out of this House—was that they were going to see a decrease. That promise did not come through. The only decrease I got was from my own initiative. Initiatives are good, and I tell everybody who's out there who might be watching this: If you get an increase, which, by all means, you're probably going to get, at least from this company and probably from many others, don't pay it. Do whatever you can, and if you're lucky enough not to have had an accident or a ticket, you might be able to get away with that. If you're not, I guess you can expect to pay some more.

This whole insurance thing is kind of disquieting because the package that we are starting to see—and I read the package over quite carefully, as well, that the insurance company sent me back and that the new one sent me back. There are a whole bunch of disclaimers that I never saw on previous policies. There are a whole bunch of things they used to pay for that they will no longer pay for. This is all part of the negotiated deal which supposedly allowed prices to drop, but I would suggest it didn't allow prices to drop. For sure what it did was allow profits to go up hugely in the insurance industry this year: things like, if your car is stolen, you

have to pay the deductible unless you have included that in your policy and paid some extra money; or if you used to get certain amounts of money for loss of wages or extra hospitalization, it was all contained there in the form. All of those things now come at a premium. They are no longer included in the policy. In fact, what I have seen from this government is a bare-bones package that is remarkably similar to that which was introduced by the Conservatives in this last House.

We have the whole problem in the insurance industry of hidden commissions. My colleague from Niagara Centre has stood up in this House and asked about hidden commissions. No one has denied there are hidden commissions. The Insurance Bureau of Canada estimates that these cost the insured public about \$359 million a year. We know you pay a commission to the broker of 12.5% on auto. We know you pay 20% on home insurance and other types of insurance. But there are also additional monies that you don't know about that are costing the insured public some \$359 million. If this government is serious about insurance, then I would suggest there is much more that needs to be done.

Certainly if you are dealing with the insurance industry, you have to tell them that you are aware of their record profits, that you will not listen to them crying poor, that you know they are making lots of money and you know that the Insurance Bureau of Canada, their own organization, is saying that some \$359 million is being skimmed off the top by the brokers in money that ordinary insured people are not aware of.

Mr Speaker, my time is almost up. I'm mindful of the time. I have two minutes and 23 seconds to conclude. I would just like to reiterate, go back and hammer home what I was trying to say. This government was elected on

a platform of change. You promised to make things better for ordinary people. The way that is to be accomplished is multi-fold. There are many things that can be done.

What I am suggesting to you is that almost all of the changes you want to make involve expenditures of money. I am asking you not to listen to those who would scream, "Cut additional programs." You are cutting too many programs. You are cutting from ministries, like environment and agriculture, that cannot afford to have cuts. You are talking about cutting in places like hospitals, although I have not, to tell you the truth, seen the actual cuts, but we know they're being rumoured around.

You are going down the same road that took them to electoral disaster. Do not attempt to do it yourself, because I can guarantee you the people out there are expecting so much more. They are expecting that you will raise the necessary funds in a buoyant economy from people who can afford to pay those funds.

I would suggest to you that instead of taking funds from people who live under the low-income cut-off figures, who live in poverty, you should be looking at other sources of revenue. You should be looking to continue socially progressive plans, such as daycare centres and businesses, such as help for those who are disabled to get to work. All of that should be part of what makes your budget and your budget tick.

Bill 149 is huge. There are some problems with it. Fix it when it goes to committee. Fix it before it is enacted in law. Please do what is right for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until Tuesday, November 30, at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga			
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands /	
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston et les îles	
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)		
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint		
Don Valley-Est	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Kitchener Centre /	
		Kitchener-Centre	
		Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
		Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley West /		Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley-Ouest		Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London North Centre /	Mathews, Deborah (L)
	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Centre-Nord	
Durham	Colle, Mike (L)	London West /	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Eglinton-Lawrence		London-Ouest	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	London-Fanshawe	Wong, Tony C. (L)
	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Markham	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Erie-Lincoln		Mississauga Centre /	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga-Centre	
	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)		
		Mississauga East /	
		Mississauga-Est	
		Mississauga South /	Peterson, Tim (L)
		Mississauga-Sud	
		Mississauga West /	Delaney, Bob (L)
		Mississauga-Ouest	
		Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara Centre /	Kormos, Peter (ND)
		Niagara-Centre	
		Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
		Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
		Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
		Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Etobicoke Centre /			
Etobicoke-Centre			
Etobicoke North /			
Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Samia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziatti, David (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 30 November 2004

Mardi 30 novembre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 November 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 novembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WATER QUALITY

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I realize this isn't question period, but I rise in the House today to pose a couple of questions to the Minister of the Environment.

Minister Dombrowsky, if a tragedy had occurred in your riding, a tragedy that resulted in several deaths and thousands of illnesses, would you have expected your constituents to have a say in how to avoid similar disasters in the future?

Minister, if a regulation had been drafted as a direct result of this tragedy, but the regulation was deemed overbearing and far too costly by rural municipalities, and the government decided to hold public consultations to hear concerns, would you have expected a consultation in your riding so that people who were directly affected could have their voices heard?

I suspect that your answer to both questions would be yes. So why did you deny the people of my riding and the people of Walkerton a public consultation on regulation 170? I thought that after you and Mr Jim Merritt, the chair of the Advisory Council on Drinking Water Quality and Testing Standards, received my letters requesting a local consultation, the two of you would have had a meeting of the minds. But I guess not. The consultations are over, and I have been informed that no more public sessions will be scheduled.

Minister, my constituents and I are left to wonder, what if: What if this tragedy had occurred in your riding? Would you have demanded that Mr Merritt hold a consultation for your constituents? I suspect I know the answer to that question as well.

CONTAMINATED PROPERTIES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Just a short time ago I came to the House with a serious situation that took place in my riding: a fire on a brownfield site, an escheated property. I made mention to the Attorney General that I thought something needed to be done about this.

I'm standing today to report to this House that something has been done about it. I appreciate very much the

actions of the Attorney General and the interministerial committee that's been struck to deal with escheated properties, specifically brownfields or fields out there that are questionable in terms of their economic viability.

My challenge was that someone's going to get hurt. The reality is that as soon as that came to the Attorney General's attention, he gave me a call and said, "What can we do to help?" "We need the government of Ontario to take some action on brownfields. We need the government to take action on escheated properties." We were given those assurances by the Attorney General, and, lo and behold, the interministerial committee has already met and is talking about ways in which we can make these escheated properties safer for people, not only in my riding but for the province of Ontario, and I'm deeply indebted to him for doing so.

We also want to make note that the city of Brantford, through its city council, took action immediately. The building has now been razed; it's down to the ground. People are safe in that community, that particular property.

I look forward to the continued work of this province with the municipalities in the province. The challenge has also been put out, and the federal government has answered the call. We're going to get three levels of government finally addressing brownfields all together.

WATER QUALITY

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I also rise today on the subject that my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound was speaking about, and that is regulation 170/03.

They did have hearings in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. They heard about it in spades, the disastrous effects the full implementation of this regulation will have on rural Ontarians. People like Gunther Borck, Gerry Belisle, Roger Imhoff and Angela Burgess let them know what the consequences of this implementation would be.

This government has decided to postpone the implementation of that regulation. What we need to see are real, substantive changes to that regulation, if not a complete redoing of the whole shebang. It is disastrous for rural Ontario and will result in economic hardship like you've never seen.

When Justice O'Connor was given his mandate to come up with new water regulations for the province of Ontario, he was not constricted by financial concerns, but a government showing leadership must take that into

consideration. We simply can't put regulations on rural people that they cannot afford without any regard to the hardship that will result for them.

There must be changes. The minister has to stop dithering and delaying, put her shoulder to the harness and get to work on this.

TOMMY DOUGLAS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It is a true honour for me, on behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park, to pay tribute to a great visionary, a great populist, a great democratic socialist and, according to last night's CBC contest, the greatest Canadian, Tommy Douglas.

Folks across this great country chose as their greatest Canadian a man who fought for public ownership and public institutions. They chose Tommy Douglas, the former leader of the federal New Democratic Party, the former Premier of Saskatchewan and the father of Canada's universal health care system. They chose someone who brought in a bill of human rights, brought electricity to rural Saskatchewan, introduced public auto insurance and set the model for crown corporations across this country.

Today it's hard to find a politician, and indeed a Canadian, who does not identify at some level or in some way with the great Tommy Douglas. In choosing Tommy Douglas as one of the greatest Canadians, Canadians have sent a message that public ownership of public institutions, from health care to auto insurance to telecommunications, is integral to the fabric of this country.

It is a fitting tribute on the 100th anniversary of Tommy Douglas's birth.

We should all take that message and continue to fight against privatization and the profit motive to keep the vision and legacy of that great Canadian democratic socialist Tommy Douglas alive.

MICHAEL SIYDOCK

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): It is with great sadness that I rise in the House today to pay tribute to OPP Constable Michael Siydock, who passed away on Friday, November 26.

Constable Siydock was on duty Friday evening when he collapsed while investigating a motor vehicle accident. He died of natural causes.

Constable Siydock was with the Ontario Provincial Police for seven years, serving on the Toronto and Port Credit detachments. Prior to becoming a police officer, he worked as a conservation officer.

Constable Siydock died while doing what he enjoyed best: serving the community and those in need.

On behalf of the provincial government, we thank Constable Siydock for serving the people of our province for the past seven years. Our condolences go out to his wife, Elizabeth, and children, Donald, Stephen and Laura.

1340

CATTLE FARMERS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Today the President of the United States starts his visit to Canada in this great province.

Rural Ontario sees this as very positive and important, because lately we've heard some positive things from Mr Bush about Canadian cattle once again crossing the border. This certainly is good news for our farmers and agribusinesses.

What isn't good news, however, is that this government has once again shown its disregard for the agriculture industry by not even bothering to get a face-to-face meeting with Mr Bush. The best this Premier is trying for is a few words during a state dinner.

The Premier and the minister should be fighting for a meeting to impress upon the American delegation that this issue is of the utmost importance and the border must be opened to live cattle as soon as possible. Instead, farmers will just have to be satisfied with passing conversation in a crowded room, if that.

To me, this is just one more example of this government's incompetence on this portfolio. Not only are they so far behind in processing safety-net funding through the CAIS program that farmers are still waiting for money for 2003; they also chose to put BSE money in half-thought-out programs like the mature animal abattoir fund. Two of the four abattoirs that received money from this program were not even capable of fulfilling the obligations of their contracts at the time they were awarded. Now the biggest problem ever to hit Ontario agriculture will not even be discussed with the President when the government had the perfect opportunity.

Let's hope that, as beef is being served at the dinner, maybe it will jog the Premier's memory that there is a real problem with a very important industry in the province he's supposed to be running.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I would like to take the opportunity to put an end to claims made by the MPP from Nepean-Carleton yesterday, implying that I've been trotting around the country threatening to close hospitals. I have no idea where he got that information, but his facts are unsubstantiated and simply untrue. I fully support the hospitals in Northumberland, and I want to see them open and providing the best health care to our community.

Let me tell you, I have been trotting around the countryside: I've been meeting with CEOs, I've been meeting with board chairs, I've been meeting with leaders of those communities, like the mayors, to make sure they have proper health care.

The McGuinty government has invested over \$12 million in health care in the riding of Northumberland, including an increase of over 20% in community access centres; base funding for Northumberland's hospital of

\$585,000; Campbellford Memorial Hospital, \$125,000; and \$667,000 to the Campbellford district mental health centre.

It's sort of ironic, because the only time you would have seen newspaper headlines reading, "Hospitals Closing in Northumberland," was under that government when they closed two hospitals: Campbellford and Cobourg.

The McGuinty government is dedicated to working with the hospitals and communities to be sure they continue to provide core services to everyone in Northumberland and in the province of Ontario.

CURRICULUM

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Last week the Education Quality and Accountability Office announced that performance on standardized provincial math testing for grade 9 students has improved this year, and I'm delighted about that.

I'm happy to announce that 68% of students in the advanced mathematics program either achieved the standard or surpassed it. But we continue to see too many students having difficulty with the applied program, in particular with applied math.

This government is addressing that fact. We understand that students are different. Students learn differently and have varying difficulties and abilities. That is why we're making changes to the curriculum for the next school year.

As the Minister of Education has stated, we have to act now. Instead of putting up roadblocks like the previous government did, we're working to break down walls to help all of our students. We will revise the grade 9 applied curriculum to make sure there are two different math courses, and not just in name.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I rise today to speak about the plan that will bring more doctors into Ontario and give Ontarians in underserved communities better access to family doctors. To quote the former NDP Premier of Saskatchewan, Roy Romanow, "This is a fundamental transformational change and is something that all of the evidence in my report indicates should be implemented." He goes on to say, "I think the government is on the right track. I believe that the government of Ontario has the support of the public."

We agree, but Howard Hampton of the Ontario NDP, on the other hand, seemed to have an odd fondness for the status quo. The NDP is not interested in transforming health care in Ontario. When the NDP had the chance, the only thing they did was cut off Ontario's supply of doctors. I remember the days when Howard Hampton said, "Roma-now, not Roma-maybe," but yesterday he flip-flopped and said, "Roma-never."

We agree with the old Howard Hampton: We have to move forward now. The one million Ontarians without

family doctors, the 142 underserved communities, seniors and northerners, cannot wait another day. The day after Tommy Douglas, the founder of medicare, was named the greatest Canadian, it is a wonder seeing today's NDP try to stand in the way of taking the next great step forward in providing health care to Ontarians. It is becoming more and more obvious that the NDP is nothing more than a tired party of the status quo, with no new ideas, dreams or solutions to offer Ontarians.

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL AUDITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2004 annual report of the Provincial Auditor.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

JAY LAWRENCE AND BART MACKEY
MEMORIAL ACT (HIGHWAY TRAFFIC
AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI DE 2004 COMMÉMORANT
JAY LAWRENCE ET BART MACKEY
(MODIFICATION DU CODE DE LA ROUTE)

Mr Rinaldi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 153, An Act in memory of Jay Lawrence and Bart Mackey to amend the Highway Traffic Act / Projet de loi 153, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à la mémoire de Jay Lawrence et Bart Mackey.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Rinaldi?

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): What this bill does is ask to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit persons from occupying the outside of a truck or the delivery body of a commercial motor vehicle, or being towed while the vehicle is being driven on the highway. We have laws in this province that prohibit people from driving a vehicle without seat belts—they'll be fined points—yet we allow people to ride in the back of a pickup truck with no restraints.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHIEFS OF POLICE

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Two weeks ago I rose in this House to pay tribute to a group of men and women who protect our communities and work to make Ontario safer. They are the front-line police officers of this province who risk their lives every single day: the

people we turn to when we're in trouble, the people who are there for us when we need them most. Today it's my privilege and pleasure to pay tribute to the leadership of that group of people, the chiefs of police and senior police leaders, on the occasion of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police Queen's Park Day. It is a worthwhile occasion. It gives us as politicians the opportunity to hear the concerns, understand the needs and continue to build partnerships with the people who manage police services across Ontario.

In a little over one year, we have seen just how much the partnership between the McGuinty government and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has accomplished to improve community safety. That partnership began in December of last year with the announcement of the Green Tide Summit, a joint initiative to combat marijuana grow operations and the threat they pose to our communities, to our children and to our economy.

1350

We stood together with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police on the lawn by Mount Sinai Hospital in June to announce legislation that, if passed, would make mandatory the reporting of gunshot wounds by hospitals and other designated health care facilities.

On October 13, together with the OACP and the OPP, the McGuinty government announced the first step in its plan to protect our children from Internet crimes of luring and child pornography. Just six days later, I stood together with Chief Ean Algar of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police to announce that the McGuinty government would introduce legislation as a first step to combat grow operations.

This occasion also serves to remind us of how important it is for us to provide the support these chiefs need to do their jobs, and members of this House have an important role to play in that regard. Thanks to the work of the officers and the goodwill of our citizens, Ontario is a safe place to live, and the McGuinty government is committed to making it even safer.

In honouring this commitment, we continue to work with the chiefs to provide the tools they need to ensure the safety of the community. This government is tough on crime and, more importantly, tough on the causes of crime. That's why we established a specialized task force in Toronto to target gun violence, particularly among gangs. The work of the anti-guns-and-gangs unit has already begun. Several large-scale police investigations have resulted in a significant number of criminal charges being laid and the seizure of many firearms.

That's why we are providing significant additional funding to fight Internet-based crimes against children and sponsoring a two-year pilot project to help the Toronto Police Service monitor and track down sex offenders. That's why we're fulfilling our commitment to invest in putting an additional 1,000 police officers on the street.

Our commitment to the safety of the people of Ontario is especially concerned with the issue of domestic violence. The McGuinty government's domestic violence

action plan, announced in April, is a multi-faceted response to a serious problem. It includes public education and training to mobilize communities to break the cycle of domestic abuse, and training for police officers, crown attorneys and others working in the criminal justice system to better assess risk in abusive situations.

Two weeks ago, I announced the introduction of the Ontario domestic assault risk assessment pilot project in Ottawa and the North Bay area. This is a tool that will identify domestic violence offenders who are likely to reoffend and thus help us protect women and their children from further abuse.

We continue to work with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police on initiatives to enhance community safety. The association is effective in promoting the interests of its membership and is a worthwhile partner for the government in securing community safety. You have no doubt heard Premier McGuinty say in this House that no single one of us is as strong as all of us working together. The McGuinty government's partnership with the Ontario Chiefs of Police is a clear example of just what working together can accomplish.

Today, on the occasion of their annual Queen's Park Day, I am pleased to salute the hard-working men and women who make up the association, who give so much to maintaining the safety of our communities and whose efforts on behalf of the communities they serve make us all proud.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I would like to make a response to Mr Kwinter's comments. First, I'd like to warmly welcome the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police to Queen's Park. Police chiefs, deputy police chiefs and other representatives of the association are meeting with MPPs throughout the day to raise some very valid issues that the McGuinty government needs to address.

I was pleased to meet this morning with 16 OACP representatives from across the province, including their president and a member from my riding, Mr Paul Hamelin, the chief of the Midland Police Service; Toronto police chief Julian Fantino; and OPP deputy commissioner Jay Hope. I would like at this time to congratulate Jay on his appointment as the deputy commissioner, along with John Carson. It's a very great distinction for both of them.

Our leader, John Tory, participated in each of the two meetings I attended this morning. The OACP made it very clear they want to work in partnership with legislators. Unfortunately, co-operation from the McGuinty government appears to be lacking at this time. I'm sure police leaders were happy to hear from our leader, John Tory, that our caucus will continue to support the police because it's the right thing to do. John Tory assured police leaders that they don't need to feel alone and that our party wants to help them do their job.

I thought I should get a few of the OACP's issues on the record in the House today, starting with the broader issue of autonomy. Police leaders are ultimately held

accountable for community safety decisions that impact their communities. When the minister recently announced the termination of option 4, he took away from police leaders the decision about what's right for the community. However, he also made this move without any real consultation with our police chiefs.

It's a sad day at Queen's Park when I read a letter from a police chief saying that he was informed of a decision through the media. I have a number of comments on some of these topics. One is from the chief of the Kingston Police Service:

"You will recall when we met on July 20, 2004, regarding option 4, I stressed three very important points. Option 4 has been a line item in our budget. If the initiative were to be cancelled, we would require sufficient notice regarding the impact on our budget. If option 4 were to be cancelled, how would the minister reimburse the Kingston police service for the lost revenue? What was the position of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, which represents the governing bodies for our police services?"

From the Peterborough police service:

"Today I was informed through the media that you have chosen to cancel all option 4 programs in the province of Ontario effective January 1, 2005. I am appalled that this announcement was carried out through the media, without advance notice to the police services involved at the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. Quoted comments attributed to you have called into question the integrity of my police service because I chose to utilize a traffic education program."

These are just two of many letters I've received, copied from Minister Kwinter, on this very important issue.

Police chiefs are also concerned about their autonomy in relation to the role of police services boards. The Police Services Act prohibits police services boards from interfering in the day-to-day operations of police. But now, police chiefs are worried about police services boards and how councils are manipulating the makeup of these boards.

Ontario's police chiefs also want action from the government on the following issues: vacant positions on police services boards; the lack of availability and training of justices of the peace; the impact on front-line policing of more police in courtrooms; lack of a minimum sentence for cultivating a narcotic when 80% of the product is exported to the United States; exemption from any mandatory retirement legislation that comes forward from your government, as you promised.

Police leaders do not seem to be convinced that Dalton McGuinty will deliver on his promise to put 1,000 new police officers on the street. Because of budget constraints, some municipalities will not be able to participate in any kind of cost-sharing arrangement with the McGuinty government in order to pay for the new police officers. It was mentioned to me this morning that municipalities will be lucky to get even 200 more cops on the street before the next election. I have said many

times in the House that the \$30 million the McGuinty government offered the police services of Ontario to put 1,000 new police officers on the street is a pittance. It's going to cost \$200 million over the mandate of your government, and you're putting in \$30 million. It's simply not enough.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: To the minister from Sudbury, the fact of the matter is, we put 1,000 new police officers on the street and we would have continued to do that today, because we keep our word. We keep our election promises. You should look at the mandate of the previous government to see how many we kept. You have not kept your promises and you know you haven't, and you're going to live with it on October 4, 2007.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond today.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's my pleasure today to introduce, in the gallery, Danika Hawthorne's dad, Brent Broadhurst, and great-uncle Robert Broadhurst. They are here visiting Danika today.

The Speaker: That's not a point of order, but welcome.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats are pleased to join in this welcome of Ontario's chiefs of police to Queen's Park. Indeed, New Democrats look forward to meeting with these chiefs later this afternoon.

1400

We want to make it very clear that it has become increasingly challenging for police leadership across this province to maintain adequately staffed and adequately resourced police services in ever more challenging times. Our police officers, women and men, are out there serving their communities, protecting property and protecting life and, more often than not, doing so at great risk to themselves.

I say that we should be exceptionally proud of our police officers, because I believe and New Democrats believe that the quality of policing here in this province of Ontario is as high as you're ever going to find anywhere in this world—make no mistake about it. Never have police officers been so well trained, so disciplined, so committed, and never have police officers had to work under such difficult circumstances.

Chiefs of police across this province, big city through to small town, are perpetually engaged now in heated and protracted battles with police services boards and councils over the most simple question, the most fundamental question, of adequate resources, adequate financing, so they can maintain some minimum standard.

I say to the minister: This recycled and now increasingly tired announcement of 1,000 new police officers has reached the point of annoyance, because you're not talking about 1,000 new police officers; you're talking about 50-cent cops on a good day—more likely 40- or 30-cent police officers. You know full well that it's the rare community in this province that can afford to pick up the huge additional costs that would be imposed upon

them were they to accept your rather meagre offer—a modest proposal indeed.

New Democrats are increasingly concerned about the health and safety of police officers, who, in circumstances of understaffing, are called upon to do tasks in inadequate numbers. We're concerned about the tools or, more importantly, the lack of tools available to police officers to do their jobs, tools that are becoming increasingly sophisticated as the criminal utilization of technology becomes increasingly advanced.

Minister, you talk about specific endeavours to control Internet predatory conduct by pedophiles, among others, but you know full well that to acquire the hardware and the personnel to deal with the IT, the information technology, and the high-tech demands is a scenario wherein police forces have to acquire yet more and higher levels of funding. If this government is serious about its commitment to police officers, then this government will immediately move to focus on the needs of communities across this province, all the way from Niagara to Toronto and to Peawanuck and Attawapiskat in northern Ontario, and ensure that police officers are there in adequate numbers, with adequate levels of training and resources, including the hard tools they need to do their job.

It's not enough to support the initial training of new police officers; municipalities are finding it increasingly difficult to ensure that their police officers are regularly involved in the upgrading and retraining that is necessary to maintain skill levels. This government talks a big game and indeed imports rather glib comments like, "It's not just about crime; it's about the causes of crime." I say to you that people have a right not only to be secure in their communities but to feel secure in their communities. One of the ways you do that is by listening to police officers and their chiefs of police across this province and ensuring adequate levels of staffing and police forces, from the very far north to the south, the east and the west, and ensuring that the police forces have the resources. That means that this government has to make a commitment to real investments in those police forces.

Enough announcements, enough recycled announcements, enough already; what we need is hard cash. We need action, we need commitment and we need a sincere movement on the part of this government to reinforce policing across the province.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Minister of Culture. There was a promise made by the Liberals opposite when they were seeking office to improve tax credits for the film industry. That promise, of course, has not been fulfilled; it's another broken promise. We look to see why the promise was broken and

the government says, "Our tax credit is competitive as it stands right now," but then today we have the auditor's report released and tabled here. It says, "No statistics were compiled to demonstrate the impact caused specifically by the tax credits." So who is correct? Is the auditor correct that there are no data, that in fact there is no measurement, of the impact of the media tax credit, or is your government correct when it says that the "tax credit is competitive as it stands right now"?

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I thank you for the question. We have received the Provincial Auditor's report, and the Ministry of Culture adopted the auditor's recommendation that we work collaboratively with OMDC and the Ministry of Finance to develop more specific performance targets and look at ways of improving measuring the performance of these tax credits. I am pleased that the auditor's report noted that the OMDC has cleared a backlog of applications, and processing time has also been reduced to 15 weeks when it used to take six months or a year. So there is a major improvement there. We are committed to ensuring that Ontario remains the film and TV industry leader in Canada.

Mr Flaherty: The auditor didn't say that the statistics were not specific enough; he said that there were no statistics compiled—nothing. Yet your government goes around telling people who work in the film industry that the tax credits are competitive. More than that, it said yesterday, "Our analysis tells us that the major impact on this industry right now is the value of the Canadian dollar." That's what your government says. What does the Auditor General say? He says, "No statistics were compiled to demonstrate the impact caused specifically by the tax credit initiatives as opposed to other factors, such as the value of the Canadian dollar or the availability of production facilities." The Auditor General says you have no data in support of what is being said by your government about the industry being affected by the Canadian dollar. Is the auditor wrong or did your government fail to disclose data to the auditor?

Hon Mrs Meilleur: I will refer the question to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I have to tell my friend for Whitby-Ajax that I am almost reckless hearing his questions. You see, his leader is out there saying, "We've got to dramatically expand the tax credit." He's referring to an auditor's report condemning the management of tax credits during the period when he was in government. Most of the analysis—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Oh, they don't like to hear that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Oxford is not even in his seat and is disrupting the proceedings.

Could you wrap up in 10 seconds?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I just want to tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax that our recent analysis in the ministry, long after this auditor completed his work on tax credits, has

to do with the dramatic rise in the value of the Canadian dollar over the course of the past three or four months. There's no coincidence, and I'll finish later.

Mr Flaherty: We hear now from the Minister of Finance that there are data. I assume he'll be bringing those data forward to this House and to the film industry of the people of Ontario so that they can see those data the Auditor General did not see.

It's worse than that. It's not just the broken promise, the untrustworthiness; it's the incompetence of the government. There are three entities now, the Auditor General tells us, with their hands all over this tax credit that are supposed to know something about it: the Ontario Media Development Corporation, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Culture. The Auditor General tells us: "We also observed that it was not clear how the responsibilities associated with establishing and monitoring performance standards and targets were to be shared among" the three. Not only that, there wasn't even consensus about what was to be measured. This is shocking.

1410

You're out there, Minister of Finance, telling the industry it's about the Canadian dollar and that their tax credit is competitive. Your three ministries can't even get along and decide what to measure. Will you just stand up and admit that your government is in disarray? You're incompetent on this issue.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'll give that suggestion, sir, all due consideration.

We're talking about the auditor's report. The period that is reported on was from April 1, 2002, to December 31, 2003, as I recall, during most of that period. But that's not the real issue.

I want to tell my friend from Whitby-Ajax—and I think he will acknowledge this—that this industry is incredibly important to Ontario. Hard-working men and women, very talented men and women, have created, over the course of the past 15 years, a very strong film and television industry in this city, province and country. I want to tell my friend that we will make sure on this side of the House and in this government that that industry is competitive. The issue is not just tax credits; it's the value of the dollar and other things that this government will do to ensure that. I want to assure my friend that that is the case.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, in the midst of the election campaign last year, you spoke at great length about the need to bring stability to our health care system. You made 36 separate promises on health care. Then you ran an ad saying Ontarians needed to work, build and dream together. I guess we shouldn't be surprised to find yet more evidence that your words mean nothing in practice. From your hated health tax to the privatization of health services to your war on hospitals,

now you've deliberately chosen to pick a fight with doctors.

Yesterday, the head of the OMA said that your behaviour was unacceptable and would do nothing to attract and retain doctors in Ontario. Premier, I agree with Dr Rapin. Is this what you meant by working and building together?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm delighted to receive the question, of course, but I would think that the OMA would be wondering about the member opposite's new-found allegiance to the Ontario Medical Association, given the member's particular predisposition toward that group in the past.

I want to quote from something he said in this Legislature. He said: "There is a term I could use to describe the OMA, but I will not use it. It is not polite. I will just say it equates to ladies of the night, and I do not have a very high opinion of those individuals."

So I was just wondering about this new-found allegiance, support, and perhaps love, for the Ontario Medical Association. I'm just wondering about this transition. Perhaps he may want to speak to that in his supplementary.

Mr Runciman: The Premier's staff had to go back about 20 years to find a quote like that, but the reality is, unlike the Minister of Health, who's running into mysterious people called Larry the doctor to support his case—it reminds me of Jimmy Stewart and Harvey the rabbit. You know, nobody else sees these people.

Premier, patients, physicians and the public at large are deeply concerned about one fundamental issue: the ability to find a doctor when they need one. Your rhetoric and bluster aside, there is an acknowledged doctor shortage. The doctors have been retiring early, leaving the province or leaving the profession altogether.

Not so long ago, you used to talk about trying to fix that. Now you're steamrolling doctors into accepting a deal in which they truly have no choice, and your minister says he'll pass regulations to make it happen—no say by doctors, no debate by the House; your way or the highway. Premier, is this what you meant by working and building together?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We are delighted to be championing an agreement that will make Ontario's family doctors, according to statistics provided by the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the highest-paid family doctors in Canada. Yes, we are proud of that agreement. We look forward to moving on that. It will also make our specialists the second-highest-paid specialists in all of Canada, and we look forward, again, to moving on that course.

I know the member opposite will also be interested in hearing what Roy Romanow is saying about this particular approach. He says:

"Canadians should keep a watchful eye on what is unfolding in Ontario.

"The government has clearly embraced the kinds of changes and a longer view of things required to

strengthen and sustain the future of our most cherished social program....

"At this point in history, well over 80% of Canadians are onside, clear about their values and how they are best expressed through medicare, waiting and hoping for change."

We are the harbingers of that change.

Mr Runciman: I wonder if the Premier asked Roy Romanow about privatizing a whole range of services in the province and people suffering. I don't think he looked for advice there.

You don't provide meaningful answers in the House. You're denying doctors the right to vote on your take-it-or-else offer. I'm telling you, doctors will be voting, and they'll be voting with their feet. This is dumb, wrong-headed and illustrates the incompetence of your government. This Liberal government has done more to encourage doctors to leave Ontario than anyone in modern history. You're starting to make Bob Rae look good. That's the reality.

Premier, in your force-fed offer there are pilot projects involving after-hours care, geriatric and palliative care, as well as 16 joint OMA-government committees, and you're asking doctors to join voluntarily. Given that you've already poisoned this relationship with the doctors, why would any doctor voluntarily join anything under this agreement, considering your callous and arrogant treatment of their profession? Why would they volunteer?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Just to remind the member opposite, we devoted nine laborious months of negotiation with the OMA—120 meetings. We also had four side tables and 44 meetings that flowed from that. What we've arrived at is an agreement that meets the needs of Ontario patients, which is the single most important responsibility we share with doctors.

I say to Ontarians at large, who could be against a plan to bring more doctors into underserved northern and rural communities? Who could be against a plan that encourages and incents doctors to practise together in teams with nurse practitioners, nurses and other health care professionals so they can bring more comprehensive family care to Ontario patients? Who could be against paying doctors to spend more time with seniors, against paying doctors to spend more time working on home care and in our nursing homes? Who could be against paying doctors and providing incentives that help us reduce our wait times? That's the plan we placed before the people of Ontario, that's the plan we placed before doctors, and together we're going to move ahead on that plan.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. In May 2000, rain washed animal waste from a nearby farm into a municipal well in Walkerton. This resulted in E coli contaminating the municipal water supply, causing seven deaths and thousands of illnesses from contaminated water. The

O'Connor report, which examined this tragedy, concluded that a combination of inadequate groundwater mapping and inadequate enforcement was a major contributor to the disaster.

Here we are, four years after these tragic events and 14 months after your government assumed power, and the Provincial Auditor bluntly warns today that overall, the Ministry of the Environment does not have adequate procedures in place to restore, protect and enhance groundwater resources. Premier, will Ontarians have to go through another Walkerton-like incident before your government finally takes action to protect Ontario's drinking water?

1420

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'll refer it to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Our government very much welcomes the report of the Provincial Auditor. He has highlighted an issue that has been very important to our government.

I'm very proud that just two weeks ago the Minister of Natural Resources and I announced \$12.5 million that will begin the good work with conservation authorities to establish groundwater protection across Ontario. Conservation authorities have welcomed this. We recognize that we are committed to implementing all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. We are plowing new ground every inch of the way. We have very willing partners across the province because, like this government, the people of Ontario believe it's absolutely essential to implement a framework that will ensure that water in Ontario is safe to drink.

Mr Hampton: It's interesting to read the Provincial Auditor's report and then go back to your budget, because page 12 of the budget says very clearly that the Ministry of the Environment is going to take another cut, a cut of at least 12%. Your own budget shows that.

I want to go back to the auditor's report. Everyone agrees that thorough groundwater mapping is the very foundation of good source water management. It's interesting that you mentioned you want to get started on this, because the auditor says there are 36 watershed areas that need to be planned. What's your government going to do? It's only going to plan six of 36, and you're only going to have this done by 2007-08. You haven't even established a time frame for the other 30 watershed plans.

Minister, will you admit to Ontarians that your 12% cut to the Ministry of the Environment budget is doing less to protect water, not more?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm very prepared to admit to the people of Ontario that this government is spending more at the Ministry of the Environment than any government for the last 10 years.

I'm very surprised that the honourable member, who was part of a government that cut the Ministry of the Environment—it was funded at \$824 million in 1991; they cut it by almost \$500 million—has the audacity to

stand in this House and suggest that our government is not committed to (1) the environment or (2) protecting water across Ontario.

With respect to the comments around source water protection, I would direct him to the draft legislation that has been posted on the Environment Bill of Rights registry. It's very clear on the framework we intend to put in place. There will be a local component. Source water protection committees will be in place, and they will be based on watersheds across the province.

Mr Hampton: Your officials were forced to admit to the auditor that you're only going to do watershed planning in six out of 36, and it won't be done until 2008. Your own budget, on page 12, says that the Ministry of the Environment is going to take another 12% cut—more of what the Conservatives did.

I want to go back again to what the auditor found. He said that your regular MOE inspections found that in only 5% of non-compliance cases were there any threats to human health. However, more rigorous SWAT team assessments of non-compliance found threats to human health in 25% of these cases. It seems to me that there is clearly a desperate need to hire more investigators to do more water investigations, not cut the Ministry of the Environment's budget by 12%.

The auditor says you can't do the job now, but you're going to cut 12% more from the budget. Is that what Dalton McGuinty meant when he said, "Choose change"—cut more, do fewer water inspections, place Ontario's water at greater risk?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: What Dalton McGuinty meant when he said, "Choose change," was that we are going to invest in our environment in the province of Ontario. I'm very proud to say that our most recent budget increased spending at the Ministry of the Environment by 12.5%. I'm very proud to say that our government has increased the number of water inspectors by 25%. We've hired 33 more water inspectors in the province. I'm very proud to say that our government has improved the standards. We've increased the standards. If you're a water inspector in Ontario, there is a rigorous standard that has to be met.

That is keeping our commitment to the people of Ontario that we want to be sure that, when they turn on the tap, their water is safe.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: The McGuinty government, like the Conservative government, is going to cut the budget but then promise to do more.

Premier, today's auditor's report reveals that workers are having their basic rights on the job violated, while your government does next to nothing. Over the past five years, the Ministry of Labour has admitted that there were 51,000 violations of the Employment Standards Act, yet out of those 51,000 violations, only 18 violations were prosecuted. That's less than 0.05% of violators

being prosecuted. Can you tell me something: Why is the McGuinty government letting 99.95% of the bad bosses off the hook when they violate workers' rights?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Labour.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I too asked that question when I took a look at what was happening with the Ministry of Labour, and then when I turned to page 240 of the auditor's report, he has a chart that notes the 1991 concerns that the auditor had at that time and how they don't appear to have changed much in the employment standards area, with the most recent report up to December 31.

One of the things he talks about is that prosecutions have been virtually non-existent, creating little incentive for employers to comply with the act. We changed that in April when we introduced Bill 63. At the same time, we launched an enhanced enforcement initiative and an enhanced awareness initiative.

The fact of the matter is, there were next to no prosecutions of employment standards during the time of the NDP and during the time of the Tories who followed. We're changing that. We followed that up in July with a new ticketing regime to make it easier to prosecute where the facts warrant it.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you mentioned Bill 63. That was before committee, and you could not find one labour representative nor any employer representatives to support your bill. They all see it for what it is: superficial paper that will do nothing.

I want to go back to the budget again, because the Ministry of Labour is going to take a further 12% cut. Once again, your government promises to do more, but then when you look at the fine print, you're going to cut the budget. Today's auditor's report also reveals that only 15% of workers who are owed wages actually get their money. Even in Alberta, they double that success rate. Today's auditor's report also reveals that as many as 30% of workplaces found to be unsafe weren't coming into compliance. Yet we hear the same story: You're going to cut the budget, but you promise to do more. How do you provide more effective enforcement when you're going to have less budget and less resources to do it with?

Hon Mr Bentley: Actually, more resources are going into the Ministry of Labour, but because we're enforcing the memorandum of understanding between the WSIB and the Ministry of Labour, the inspectors that we're hiring are being fully paid for by the WSIB. That's why in July we were able to announce 200 more health and safety inspectors, because they'll be fully paid for by the WSIB, so it doesn't come out of the pockets of the people of Ontario. Those inspectors will make sure that our workplaces are properly inspected and our laws are properly enforced.

It was interesting, as well, that the member made reference to the fact that monies owing under the Employment Standards Act have not been collected. That was the problem during the NDP years. Collection rates of monies owing under employment standards have

rarely been better than 20 or 25%. That's why we're changing the process.

We announced the enhanced enforcement initiative last April. It includes proactive inspections and determination to more effectively collect monies owing—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Final supplementary.

1430

Mr Hampton: Your ministry officials tried that line on the auditor, and the auditor didn't buy it. Taking money out of the pockets of injured workers and then saying you're going to do better enforcement in terms of unsafe workplaces doesn't cut it. It also isn't going to do anything for employment standards. It's not going to do anything for those workers who are owed overtime, those workers who are owed vacation pay or those workers who simply haven't been treated fairly on the job.

What did Dalton McGuinty mean when he said to workers, "Choose change," and now we find that the Ministry of Labour budget is going to be cut a further 12%? The auditor says you can't do the job as it is. What's a further 12% cut going to do, Minister? How many workers are going to be hurt as a result of that?

Hon Mr Bentley: Unfortunately, the honourable member isn't doing his math. The ministry is actually spending more money, but because the money is being recovered fully from the WSIB, it means less money is coming out of the public coffers: more money, more inspectors.

I was fascinated that the honourable member said we were taking money out of injured workers' pockets. We didn't take it out. In 1994, it was the NDP who took money out of workers' pockets when they cut inflation protection for injured workers, and the Tories followed that up in 1997 when they did even more. The member should be ashamed for talking about taking money out of injured workers' pockets, because he and his party did it in 1994. Now we have to try to fix the mess they left us, and we're going to do that.

VISITOR

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce the Speaker's aunt, who is sitting up in the gallery. She's 96 years old and is here from Jamaica to check on her nephew to make sure he's doing a good job.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): A good point, but not a point of order. New question.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. During the last election, you and the Premier promised the people of Ontario that you would shut down Ontario's coal-powered plants by 2007. You said, "No more coal." In today's Windsor Star, your hometown newspaper, you're quoted as saying, if I may, that coal reserves will be needed if, "God forbid, some-

thing happens to the Beck generation station" at Niagara Falls. Furthermore, in the Ottawa Citizen you admitted that the intermittent wind power strategy will not work and will require coal backup systems.

Minister, this is a classic McGuinty Liberal flip-flop. You now know that you have not been telling the people of Ontario the truth over the past 14 months. Will you stand in your place today and finally admit to the people of Ontario that this was an irresponsible and ridiculous election promise?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Our government is on target to close the coal plants and reduce the air emissions that have caused an alarming increase in the rate of childhood asthma and have caused 1,800 premature deaths in this province, as recounted by independent sources.

The commitment that we are on target to make is on schedule and we are moving toward it. We're bringing on new and cleaner electricity. I remind the member that we announced the Niagara tunnel initiative earlier this year; we announced 395 new megawatts of clean, renewable power; we have proceeded with the CETI negotiations—that is, the Conawapa project in northern Ontario—which is more good news.

We believe it is in the interest not only of the people of this province but of anyone downwind from major sources of coal that it is appropriate to remove the coal issue from our air quality. This government made that commitment, and we're moving toward achieving it in a prudent and responsible fashion.

Mr O'Toole: This is one more classic example of Liberal obfuscation.

Minister, why did you tell the Windsor Star what I've just quoted? You tell the people of Ontario and the House, on the official record today, something totally different. It reminds me of the complete election platform by the now Liberal government, saying one thing to get elected and doing something quite opposite.

You know you did this to win votes. You made these promises knowing they were irresponsible. You've given out sweetheart deals to your buddies in the wind industry. This is a fundamental demonstration of incompetence and mismanagement of the very highest order. Minister, it's simply a choice of whether you have actually not done your homework or a matter of your having been ill-informed. You can't squirm out of it any longer. Will you admit to the people of Ontario that you have failed and broken promises on every issue of the energy file, as on many other files as well?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I want to warn the member to be careful with his language as he describes certain proceedings here.

Minister?

Hon Mr Duncan: No, we're keeping our promises on the energy file. Let me tell you about incompetence. Incompetence is saying that Pickering A unit 4 will cost \$400 million and it cost \$1.2 billion. Incompetence is about opening the energy market and then slapping it

down with a price freeze that cost Ontario consumers and taxpayers a billion dollars. Incompetence is about not improving the supply in Ontario over eight years, to the point where our reserves were down to the dangerous point of 11% two summers ago. Incompetence is about not facing the challenge of the energy file head-on.

Our government is committed to improving the quality of air in this province by reducing and eliminating the emissions associated with coal. We're on target to do it, we're going to do it and we're going to do it in a responsible fashion, for the future of this province and the people who live in it.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. More than 23,000 highly skilled Ontario workers and their families depend on the aerospace industry to provide well-paying jobs. In fact, we're joined here today by some of these working women and men from Toronto's Bombardier-de Havilland plant. They're up there in the gallery. They are here because Bombardier, as you probably know, will soon decide where it's going to assemble the C series of jets. These hard-working CAW families want those jobs here in Ontario, but that's going to take action from your government, action we haven't yet seen. Ontario's aerospace industry cannot succeed unless the provincial government steps up to the plate and gets involved. I want to know, Minister, what is your plan to bring the C series production to Ontario?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I have been talking to Bombardier and I have met with aerospace industry officials over the past number of months. I met them at the Farnborough aerospace show in London and we talked about the future of the industry. In fact, the industry is on a rebound worldwide, and that's good news for production here in Ontario and good news for workers in Ontario who are looking forward to better years. They have gone through a difficult period over the last number of years, particularly after 9/11. I say to the member that we will be discussing matters with Bombardier, that we will be in discussions around what they are proposing. We have talked to them and will continue to talk to them about what the future might hold for Bombardier in Ontario, in Canada.

Ms Horwath: Minister, talk and meetings are a good first step, but as we all know, the clock is ticking away on this issue. That decision is going to be made very soon. The status quo is simply not good enough. Ontario stands to lose a multi-billion-dollar industry. The Quebec government has already stepped up to the plate to build their industry, offering tax incentives, loan guarantees, export credits, residential value guarantees, research and development funding and many more things. Meanwhile, Ontario is letting new investment in that kind of industry take flight by failing to provide leadership and a strategy. Will you commit now to an aerospace strategy that will

bring the C series jet production to de Havilland and aerospace jobs to Ontario, something more than just a wing and a prayer?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I remind the member that we are in discussions with Bombardier, among other companies in the aerospace business. We're talking with respect to what the future holds for the industry. I have to tell you, the future is a very promising one for the province of Ontario. The climate for investment has never been better for this province. In fact, as a result of the huge investment that Ford Canada made in this province, we've seen a huge vote of confidence for this economy.

1440

I say to the member, I'm very optimistic about the prospects for Ontario and for the aerospace industry in this province, as the prospects increase and become brighter for all workers in Ontario, because, I'll tell you what, this government is taking action. We are moving in a positive direction. We're taking action with respect to investments we've made in the auto sector, key investments that will be providing high-paying, high-value-added jobs, and it will be no different in the aerospace industry.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question too is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I'm interested in the auto industry in Ontario. I have a great deal of interest in the auto industry. In my riding of Essex and those of Windsor-St Clair and Windsor West, the auto sector is incredibly important. Companies like Ford, DaimlerChrysler and General Motors provide good jobs. The auto sector is a linchpin in the Ontario economy.

News reports from the Globe and Mail and the New York Times and figures from Ward's Automotive tell us that Ontario production in the auto industry will surpass Michigan for the year 2004. This says great things about the auto sector in Ontario. What is your view of the state of the auto industry in Ontario, Minister?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'm very proud to report to this House that Ontario is indeed poised to become North America's leading jurisdiction when it comes to auto production. I'm also delighted and proud of the fact that our auto workers deserve a lot of credit for their very high skill level. In fact, they are the best auto workers in the world, second to none. And I'm proud of this Premier—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Member from Nepean-Carleton, for most of question period you've been behaving excellently, but in the last 10 minutes it has deteriorated. Please come to order.

Minister?

Hon Mr Cordiano: There is just too much good news they are not willing to listen to.

I have to tell you, I'm very proud of this government's and this Premier's commitment to the auto sector.

Through our automobile investment strategy, we will continue to make sure that Ontario is on the cutting edge when it comes to auto investment.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): There's been a lot of talk about the high dollar and its effect on exports; timely because the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters are at Queen's Park today.

In my riding of Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, we have many companies that have grown and have started exporting out of Ontario. Ecotech, an innovative design, engineering and manufacturer of industrial water purification systems, export their knowledge and promote products internationally.

Ontario, the leading auto-producing jurisdiction in North America, is a wonderful accomplishment. Minister, I've heard a lot about your auto strategy and had the opportunity to join with you in Oshawa at the truck plant a couple of weeks ago. How will your strategy keep our industry competitive in the face of increasing global competition and changing market conditions?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I'm happy to say that, even as the market is changing for autos, Ontario will continue to be at the forefront of competitiveness.

I want to cite a report that was handed down by Scotiabank yesterday. It stated that parts shipments rose 7%, year over year, through September 2004, roughly double the increase of US suppliers. I quote from the report: "The Canadian auto parts industry continues to gain market share in North America, despite strong headwinds from a soaring Canadian dollar."

We are positioned to do better things in the future and continue to be at the forefront of competitiveness, and it is through our auto investment strategy that we'll continue to make investments in key areas with respect to skills development, research and development, energy savings and environmental technology.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having a difficult time hearing the minister. The member from Whitby-Ajax and the member from Don Valley East are having a discussion. Will you all come to order, please.

Hon Mr Cordiano: I'm beginning to think it grates on the opposition's ears when there is good news in Ontario. That's sad.

Interjection: They should be happy.

Hon Mr Cordiano: They should be happy, and they should be applauding the auto sector and auto workers.

I'm just delighted to say to the House that the industry is at the forefront of competitiveness and will continue to be as a result of the key investments we're making in the auto sector.

GREENBELT

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a question for the Premier. Last night, I joined about 800 concerned citizens at the greenbelt public information session in Caledon. Last week it brought out a similar crowd in St

Catharines, probably the most emotional and heated public meeting I have attended in recent memory. My colleagues from Durham report the same from the hearings in Oshawa.

If you listen to the feedback from these hearings, there are serious, broad-based and fundamental concerns with your legislation and the lack of science underlying your greenbelt map. Your government is telling concerned citizens that it wants to pass the bill before December 16, leaving a maximum of four days for MPPs to review hundreds of submissions from across the province. The haste with which you are proceeding with this legislation is unnecessary and irresponsible. We believe in protecting green space, but to do so based on science. Premier, will you extend the deadline for consultations and send this legislation to committee hearings in the new year?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): No, we will not extend our time frame. We're moving ahead with a very important piece of legislation. It's more than passing strange, just a little rich, to have a request for more consultation from a member of the former Conservative government in Ontario, which broke all records when it came to ramming legislation through in this Legislature.

There have been significant opportunities for people to comment on the general thrust of this policy. We've had hearings now with respect to the specifics. We look forward to moving ahead. We're talking about creating something here that will be durable, that will be beneficial for generations yet to come. We're talking about preserving in perpetuity 1.8 million acres of green space to enhance not only the quality of our lives but of generations yet to come.

Mr Hudak: Certainly that partisan response will be cold comfort to the thousands of people who have expressed their concerns about the legislation and have asked for additional time for consultations and committee hearings.

It's not just me, Premier. The Wellington county planning committee is recommending to the province an extension of the December 16 deadline because of the last-minute inclusion of Wellington. The Durham region chair, Roger Anderson, in the Toronto Star was critical of the province's December 16 deadline, with just four days for comments. Mayor Rod Finnie of Erin, Ontario, expressed his displeasure with those tight time frames. In a similar article in the Wellington Advertiser, even municipal affairs civil servants seem to agree that the time frame is simply unreasonable.

When Erin town manager Lisa Haas asked Victor Doyle, your civil servant at municipal affairs, "How can you review comments and have a final plan by December 16?" Doyle reportedly said, with a wry grin, "Good question."

Premier, I'll ask you again, will you respond to municipal leaders, farmers and concerned taxpayers, extend the time frame for consultations and send the bill to an all-party committee for consideration in the new year?

Hon Mr McGuinty: To be clear, I know that the member opposite and his party do not support the preservation of green space; I understand that. They have been very clear about that in the past and they're very clear about their position on that today. But we believe that we have a responsibility to proceed with this very important public policy initiative, and it has support from a number of groups.

The member opposite quoted from some municipal officials, as will I. Bill Fisch, the chair of York region: "We're very pleased about it. York region will be picking up more than a thousand acres ... of new parkland." Larry Di Ianni, Hamilton mayor: "The government is doing what it said it would. We have a little of both, protection for sensitive lands and space for growth." Neil Rogers, president of the Urban Development Institute says that "the deal should mark the end of a long and acrimonious period between the industry and the provincial government that predates the Liberals."

We are moving ahead with this in a responsible and conscientious way, and we are doing it for all the right reasons, because we feel that we have a responsibility to generations yet to come—not just ours—to preserve green space in perpetuity.

1450

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The Provincial Auditor noted in his annual report that there are ongoing problems with the computer system at the Ontario disability support program. Of course, this is the computer system put in place by Andersen Consulting, now Accenture.

The auditor noted that the computer system lacks internal controls, fails to meet ministry needs, fails to meet recipients' needs and causes unexplained errors and omissions, and yet Accenture, the creator of this abysmal computer system, is still on your government's payroll until at least October 2005.

Minister, you had so much to say about Accenture when you were in opposition, and all of it was negative. Why are they still on your payroll?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): We've had a very interesting year of discussions with the last government's favourite company, Accenture. Let me just say that we have had some very fruitful discussions. The company is not legally liable for any of the work.

The last government entered what they called a common procurement process, which in the end the Provincial Auditor said, very clearly, absolutely did not work. This government—the people of Ontario—have a billion-dollar system they are now stuck with and don't have a legal leg to stand on. That's what we have to thank the last government for.

Let me tell the Speaker and, through the Speaker, the people of Ontario, that in this past year we have moved

mountains to make a system that is more accountable and reliable to the people who need it the most; that is, the people on social assistance who deserve the appropriate amount of support when it's required.

Ms Martel: I'm glad you're having fruitful discussions with Accenture, except the program still doesn't work and they're still on your payroll.

Look, the Provincial Auditor pointed out that a number of the problems he identified in this new report were also identified in the 2002 Ontario Works report. These were the same problems that the auditor pointed out in his 1998 report, when he investigated this boondoggle.

Andersen Consulting, now Accenture, has done very well by the taxpayers of Ontario. They were paid \$66 million more than the \$180-million cap set for the project, their staff were paid more than the rates for people doing comparable work in the public service, they got paid for savings to social assistance that didn't result from their work and they're still on your payroll. When are you going to cut Anderson-Accenture loose so the Ontario taxpayers can stop being ripped off?

Hon Ms Pupatello: What is really important to note is that of all parties, the NDP, who ran the biggest debacle of a government in the history of Ontario, should rightly ask these questions of the former government. I had many questions of the former government. How dare they spend taxpayers' money with such unaccountable methods as they did in the social assistance system? I ask the people of Ontario to note with interest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm having difficulty hearing you, between the member from Trinity-Spadina and the member from Nickel Belt. Could I have—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We'd like to proceed with question period.

Minister?

Hon Ms Pupatello: Thank you. The people of Ontario have a right to know that, unlike the last government, we've actually put people in place to check things like overpayments, to make sure we have on our social assistance system people who are very vulnerable and need the right level of help. We actually have people doing that work now, an area that was completely ignored by the last government, despite the Provincial Auditor pointing that out repeatedly.

All I have to say to the last gang who thought they were so smart is, they made an absolute mess of our social assistance system.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Mr Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's your party that is holding up your time. Member from Don Valley West.

Ms Wynne: My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Report after report has identified the lack of affordable housing as a key obstacle to overcoming poverty for many families in the province, but more particularly in Toronto. According to the city of Toronto's report on housing and homelessness, over 65,000 households are on social housing waiting lists and a third of families in Toronto fall below the affordability level of the average rent. Many of those live in our ridings of Don Valley West and Don Valley East, as you know.

The Daily Bread Food Bank has found that almost two thirds of food bank users spend an alarming 67% of their income on rent. Clearly, for many in our city and in our ridings, market rental housing is not affordable.

For most of the last decade, the previous government stood by and did nothing as housing became less and less affordable for the least fortunate among us. For most of the last decade, the previous government took the position that housing was not the business of the provincial government. Minister, in contrast to the previous administration, would you outline what this government is doing to promote the construction of affordable housing?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): There is an enormous contrast. In fact, over 3,200 units of affordable housing have been approved by our government. An additional 2,100 affordable housing units have been made available to municipal providers, with \$85 million in the 2004-05 budget. The former government allowed a lot of the federal money to languish in bank accounts; we've unlocked those federal dollars. We've provided additional flexibility by extending program deadlines, changing the procurement rules and broadening pilot eligibility.

We are currently consulting with our municipal stakeholders and other housing providers on a new housing program in Ontario. Most importantly, we are in an advanced stage of negotiations with our federal partners on a new affordable housing program that will include new flexibilities. This will allow us to meet our commitments to match the federal dollars and deliver those much-needed affordable housing units.

Ms Wynne: Thank you for an answer that indicates you're making a start on this critical shortage. Among the most interesting meetings I've had in recent months was with Mike Labbé of Options for Homes, a non-profit group that uses a truly innovative model to promote ownership of affordable housing for lower-income Ontarians and Canadians by leveraging, rather than simply spending, government subsidies. Indeed, under the Options for Homes approach, people who would otherwise find themselves strapped to meet the monthly rent are able to benefit from the dignity of home ownership with a level of subsidy that's consistent with the Canada-Ontario affordable housing agreement. What is this government doing to promote the inclusion of innovative approaches like Options for Homes, which promote construction of affordable housing across the province?

Hon Mr Caplan: It's an excellent question. In fact, on November 8, I joined with John McKay, my counterpart from the federal government, to make an historic announcement: funding for 382 units of affordable ownership housing units in three pilot locations in Scarborough, Pickering and Markham. These projects are built by Options for Homes, Mike Labbé's group, and will provide permanent, affordable housing for Ontarians who need it. Options for Homes and home ownership alternatives are not only building these homes, they're building communities in partnership with the McGuinty government. We are very proud to be partners in this regard.

I intend to make affordable home ownership a significant component of the new round of the Canadian-Ontario affordable housing program. I encourage developers, non-profits and community organizations to come forward with creative ideas so we can make the dream of home ownership a reality for so many Ontarians.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Health. You have been the minister now for 14 months. During that time, you've attacked health professionals like—

Interjections.

Mr Jackson: Apparently your caucus is very proud of your attacks on chiropractors, physiotherapists and optometrists, they're very proud of your declaring war on two thirds of hospitals in our province, and they're extremely proud of your treatment of Ontario's 22,000 doctors with your take-it-or-leave-it attitude, which can no longer be referred to as any form of negotiation, ever, in our province.

1500

Your regional staff of your ministry have informed my local hospital, Joseph Brant, and, I can only assume, others, that they may not be eligible for any of the \$107 million you've put aside for reducing and shortening waiting lists in our province for cataracts and hips and knees. Why are your staff threatening patients in my community?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's only the honourable member who can turn every story to suit the storyline he wants to work. Here's the very clear reality: We have \$107 million to invest in a wait time strategy for the balance of the fiscal year 2004-05, which only has four months to go. Obviously, therefore, in seeking out from Ontario hospitals to see who has capacity available, we have to take into consideration who has the nurses ready to roll, who has the capacity in their operating rooms to be able to fulfill the services, who has the capacity from a fiscal standpoint to be able to manage these challenges.

We have a limited amount of resources, and one of the limited resources we have on this point is time. Therefore, obviously, for the balance of fiscal 2004-05, we will be targeting these resources at the hospitals in

our province best suited to meet the demands of patients. At the end of the day, it's not about your hospital or your hospital; it's about the capacity of our health care system to be able to meet the important patient needs of Ontarians. What are we talking about? More cataract surgeries, more hip and knee surgeries, more cardiac—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Jackson: Minister, the one person who doesn't have limited resources is you. According to the estimates of your own ministry, you feathered your own nest by expanding your own administrative staffing complement by 7% in this year's budget, and yet you're asking the citizens of Burlington to live with one half of 1% for their entire hospital. Burlington has a population of 150,000 people. There are a considerable number of people from the ridings of Stoney Creek, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot and Oakville who attend Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital.

This hospital has always been performing under the expected cost per weighted case for patient care consistently throughout its history, yet you're telling this House that they will not be eligible for funding under your program because your bureaucrats deem them to be inefficient, when in fact they are. Minister, will you assure those communities that all patients—

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon Mr Smitherman: All patients in this province have equal access to the fund. It's necessary to spend the funds well and to make sure the services can be fulfilled. Those are the criteria we subjected all hospitals to, as is fully appropriate. But what I find interesting is that the honourable member has so quickly forgotten his own propensity to spend public tax dollars on hotel rooms and steaks, and challenges me on the issue of administrative costs.

The very clear reality is that we are a government that is determined to make progress on the important patient needs of the people of Ontario. That's why we've invested \$107 million in a wait time strategy for the balance of this fiscal year: more cataract surgeries, more hip and knee surgeries, more cancer surgeries, more cardiac, and a 20% improvement in our access to MRIs and to CT scans. That is our record: more services for Ontario's patients.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Transportation, but I must say, the answer of the Minister of Health was unbecoming of a minister.

My question to the Minister of Transportation is the following: You will know that in the last Parliament your Premier, then-opposition leader Dalton McGuinty, along with your transportation critic and myself, opposed the Tory government's move to privatize winter road maintenance. I will note that in the Provincial Auditor's report

issued today, yet again—for about the fourth or fifth time, I must say—the Auditor says that this particular move to privatize winter road maintenance did not ensure effective oversight and evaluation of the performance of contractors engaging and maintaining provincial highways, and that the appropriate corrective action was not taken. Will you today admit that winter road maintenance privatization was a mistake, and will you keep your government's promise from when you were in opposition to cancel the privatization of winter road maintenance?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me tell you, I really appreciate the work of the Provincial Auditor. I have a background in finance, and I know how much work has gone into it.

We are going to look very seriously at all the recommendations the Provincial Auditor has made and determine our cause of action as we move forward. Some of these contracts are long-term contracts, so we want to make sure right now that we monitor those contracts properly and make sure that they give us value for money.

VISITORS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the visitor's gallery we have Lieutenant Colonel Hugh Tilley from the Salvation Army, who is here to remind us that the Christmas kettle appeal for the Salvation Army is underway in all of our communities across Ontario. Hopefully, we can all get behind the Salvation Army and the amazing work it does for those in need in this province. Let's hear it for the Salvation Army and the good work it does.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to point out that former school trustee Mary Lou Fleming from the great city of Ottawa is in the gallery.

PETITIONS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I have a petition to save the Banting homestead.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth"—Alliston—"is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled The Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I want to thank all those from the Alliston Dairy Queen and Brisco Furniture who have signed this petition, and I've also signed.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students,"—my bill—"which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my signature to this petition and give it over to Nicholas.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly which is from the Meaford Fire Department.

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

I've also signed this.

1510

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that pro-

fects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

Needless to say, Mr Speaker, I support this petition and have affixed my signature to it.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario’s professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I am more than pleased to support this petition.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to keep Muskoka a part of northern Ontario, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

“Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

“Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

“Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario would adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to

programs and incentives enjoyed by residents of other northern communities; and

“Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

“Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

“Whereas this is a mean-spirited and politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery.”

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I’m pleased to read in the following petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

“Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

“Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

“Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned,” request “that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to save the Banting homestead:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada’s first Nobel Prize recipient; and

“Whereas this great Canadian’s original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth—or Alliston—“is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

“Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I want to thank the good people at the Alliston Dairy Queen and Briscoe Furniture for circulating this petition. Of course, I agree with it and have signed it.

TUITION

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I have a petition on behalf of University of Toronto students from the Mississauga, Toronto and Scarborough campuses. The petition reads:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took a historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign this petition, as I will the rest of them, and hand this over to Danika.

1520

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to save the Leslie M. Frost Centre, and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre is Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre, aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on ecosystems and how they can be sustained for future generations; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government refused to consult with municipalities and other user groups before taking this drastic action and continues to operate in a clandestine manner; and

"Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary, post-secondary institutions as well as a variety of other groups;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with" unique "special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001; and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August" of 2003 "the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I thank those who signed this petition, and I agree with it.

VISITORS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask the other members to welcome over 100 kids from my riding who are here today from Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. I'd particularly like to embarrass my son, Winston, who is here on the east side, bottom row. Come on, Winston, stand up there so I can see you. He's not co-operating. And teachers Jennifer McCreary, Heather Medley-Fernandez and Jessica Murray, with her grade 10 civics class from Bracebridge.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's not a point of order, but they're welcome.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT (FALL), 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (AUTOMNE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 29, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 149, An Act to implement 2004 Budget measures, enact the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004 and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 149, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2004, édictant la Loi de 2004 sur la Société d'émission d'obligations de développement du Nord de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Beaches-East York had just completed his speech. Questions and comments?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to comment on the speech by the member from Beaches-East York. He did indeed take a whole hour, which is commendable, I must say, to speak to this budget bill, Bill 149. He made a number of points, which is his wont to do.

I want, in the few seconds that I have, to comment once again on the apprenticeship training tax credit. This

will be important for many regions of Ontario, and no less so for my own region of Chatham-Kent Essex. Very early on in my first election time of 1995, persons approached me at that date, almost 10 years ago, talking about the need to address the situation of apprenticeships.

According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2003 skilled trades survey, within the next 15 years, 52% of skilled tradespersons are expected to retire. So we're going to need to replace those fine jobs that exist in those various skills. As well, 41% of respondents anticipate that they will face skills shortages in their industry within five years. That was some of the message and the substance of the message that was given to me in 1995, in terms of skills training in my community and, indeed, through the Windsor and Chatham-Kent Essex area.

This plan for new funding of \$11.7 million annually by 2006-07 will expand to some 26,000 the number of young people registered in apprenticeships. This is indeed a welcome aspect of this bill. Also included in Bill 149 is a provision on Ontario property tax credits for seniors. For moderate- and low-income persons, it will increase the basic property tax amount from \$500 to \$625.

The Speaker: Questions and comments. Member for Toronto-Danforth, are you—member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Thank me.

Mr Wilson: My colleague from the NDP is rescuing me here today.

I'm happy to make a couple of comments on the budget bill. It strikes me that the government, when introducing this bill, was bragging about the fact that they've increased the seniors' property tax credit by \$125. What they forget to tell seniors across the province is that in the last budget bill they cancelled the \$400 tax credit we had put in place to offset education taxes paid by seniors who no longer have children in the local schools. It's something seniors have asked for for many years. So they've robbed Peter to pay Paul, and they conveniently forget to mention that seniors are actually getting ripped off by about \$275, had they stuck with the Conservative government rather than switched to the Liberal government.

Secondly, this bill removes the sales tax credit for vehicles that are modified to accommodate disabled people. I think that's just a shame. The government says it was an underutilized program. Well, if it was an under-utilized program and was costing you only a little bit of money, then you should have kept it in place. It's obviously of great value to those disabled citizens who need a modified vehicle to get them around.

Finally, as the former Minister of Health and a seatmate of Mr Miller here, this bill removes the district of Muskoka from the designation of northern Ontario. This means, for example, that citizens in Muskoka will no longer qualify for the northern Ontario travel health grant. They won't qualify for other incentives to bring

physicians to their area, and I know that Muskoka, Mr Miller's riding, along with many other ridings in the province, needs that extra help to attract physicians. They will no longer qualify for special road grants. They will no longer qualify for any grants under the \$30-million-a-year northern Ontario heritage fund, which, by the way, the NDP had gutted when they were in government, and which Mr Harris, when he was in government, doubled to \$60 million a year, and now the people of Muskoka won't have access to that.

Ms Churley: It's my pleasure to take a couple of minutes to congratulate my colleague the member for Beaches-East York, who spoke for an hour on this bill. I'm sure he could have gone on much longer had he been given the time, because there are a lot of things in this bill that we need to point out to people.

A couple of things I want to dwell on, just for this short time: This act ends the rebate for modification of vehicles used to transport handicapped people. I don't understand why you're doing that. It was this member, the member for Beaches-East York, who, because he raised it in the House on several occasions and created a stink, was able to get the rebate for Jason Chenier, who is from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. I know he went to his Liberal member and wasn't able to get support and help that way. I give credit to our member here, who raised it and raised it and was able to get that rebate for him. But everybody deserves this rebate, and I encourage the member for Beaches-East York to keep on the government and have them rescind this really regressive step taken in this bill.

They say it was underutilized. I would say it was underutilized because enough people didn't know about it. It seems to me—I don't want to use the H word here, so I won't—that the government is bringing in a disability act here that will take up to 20 years to bring into force, and at the same time is cancelling this minuscule program that can help people right now. I would urge the government to do something about that.

The other thing I want to talk about is that the PST rebate for energy-efficient appliances, which expired in July 2004, was not renewed. This is really critical. They brought in a rebate for residential solar systems and things like that, but a lot of people need to start with the baby steps, and that's been taken away from them.

So I would urge the government to bring back these two very important rebates for people.

1530

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Just to carry on with what my colleague from Chatham-Kent Essex mentioned, this bill will definitely encourage people to follow their training. We know that in the next couple of years at least 50% of our skilled tradespeople are expected to retire, and this means we have to invest in colleges and universities.

When we look at what our government, the McGuinty government, has done since the election of October 2003—we said we would increase the number of MRIs in the province. To increase the number of MRIs, we have

to develop technicians. This bill will definitely make the money available for those people who want to develop themselves in the technical field to respond to the needs of patients in hospitals.

We said we would reduce waiting times in hospitals. Again, we have to have the money in the colleges to create the space to meet those requirements, so we had to come up with the money.

We have to develop our teachers, to respond to the needs in our province—our Minister of Education has said that we'll reduce the number of children in classes from junior kindergarten to grade 3. Again, we need the money to develop those people.

We said we would invest in the infrastructure program. Again, we need engineers. The tax breaks that people will be getting to train those people in on-the-job training we have available will be in place to respond to the needs of the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Jim Brownell): Response?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I thank the members for Chatham-Kent Essex, Simcoe-Grey, Toronto-Danforth and Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for their comments, although, I must admit, in listening to their comments I was hoping that some of them might have commented on what I actually said in this Legislature for an hour. I commend my colleague from Toronto-Danforth for actually dealing with the issues I raised at that time. But I thank the other members, even though they may not have listened to my speech or may not have understood it, who at least contributed to the debate in their own way.

The member for Chatham-Kent Essex talked about apprenticeship taxes, and of course those are important. The member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell talked about the same thing, to reiterate his concern. The member for Simcoe-Grey talked about the seniors' property tax break. Of course we all have to do something—anything we can—to assist our seniors in this province.

The real issue, and what I talked about myself in that hour, was four major faults in the legislation. First and foremost was the elimination of the capital tax, which is going to take about \$1 billion out of this province over the next five to six years. The money that is going to be taken out of the province comes primarily from two sources: from the banks, which this year made well in excess of \$1 billion in profit, and from the insurance companies, which are closing in on \$1 billion of profit. That is money this province cannot afford to lose, especially if this government continues its wanton desire to tax those who can ill afford to pay, as they have done with the very regressive health tax.

I also spoke about ending the PST on handicapped individuals and their cars, ending the PST on energy efficiency and the very poor job that was done in implementing the recommendations of the securities task force of the finance committee.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to rise and spend a few minutes talking

about Bill 149, the fall budget bill, and I'll be sharing my time with the member for Brant.

I want to focus a little bit on some of the initiatives that have been highlighted in the fall budget bill and then spend a few minutes talking about, at its heart, why we are undertaking the transformation that we are in this province.

Obviously, the main purpose of the third budget bill is to advance the plans our government outlined in our 2004 budget and continue with the process of implementing the measures contained in that budget.

The fall budget bill brings forward some specific amendments that I want to highlight today, and the one I want to spend a few minutes talking about is the amendment with respect to the apprenticeship training tax credit.

Last Friday in my riding I held a job fair, coordinated by my constituency office, working with local business people in the community, working with support groups that assist those who are looking for jobs. I can tell you, at that session I had an opportunity to talk about the new apprenticeship training tax credit and the work that our government is doing to focus more impetus on apprenticeship in this province. We received a lot of praise for that work with respect to an encouragement of apprenticeship programs when I had a chance to speak to people out there.

I'll just talk for a few minutes about what this plan contains. It contains \$11.7 million annually by 2006-07, to expand to some 26,000 the number of young people who will be able to register in apprenticeship programs. And when we talk about what will end up being a deficit of skilled workers in our province, we certainly want to look to the next generation that can come forward and meet that need.

We also need to remove, and we are as a government working to remove, the cultural and bureaucratic barriers faced by skilled, internationally trained workers by investing another \$12.5 million annually by 2005-06 to work with our professional regulatory bodies to increase access, expand training, provide work with the professional organizations, provide training and employment services, transition into Ontario's workplace and improve the information that is available to those workers so they'll have opportunities when they come and join our province.

In my first speech in this Legislature I had a chance to talk about the fact that it was not acceptable to me that we had skilled professionals and skilled workers in this province who were not able to meet their full capacity, who were driving taxis, who were doing other jobs for which they had much more training than that.

I can tell you that the stark reality of the barriers that internationally trained professionals and workers face in our province was clear to me last Friday, in my own community, as I held the job fair and had an opportunity to go around to the people who were attending and ask them, "How long have you been looking for a job? Where do you come from; what country have you

emigrated from?" Many, many of the individuals who were there told me long stories, stories that I know we've all heard, about the barriers they faced when they came to our province. We certainly need to do what we can as a province to make sure that those barriers are diminished.

I want to talk for a moment about another development, and another part of the budget bill, which is the Ontario property tax credit for seniors. With this bill we will be demonstrating our support for seniors. We have put forward an estimated \$85 million in benefits to about 685,000 senior families, which will include approximately 33,000 senior families that do not currently benefit from this credit. The basic property tax credit will increase from \$500 to \$625; that's about a 25% increase. Giving them \$125 more in their pockets this year will help the low- and middle-income seniors who live in each of our communities, and they will get those funds each and every year.

The last thing I want to spend a few minutes talking about is why we are doing this. We have embarked on a transformation of our health care system, among others, in this province. The fall budget bill indicates that we are on track in providing some greater transparency and accountability and a transformation of our health care system.

The need for greater transparency and accountability in our systems across all government was certainly highlighted today by the Office of the Provincial Auditor of Ontario. He has an entire chapter dedicated in the auditor's report that is entitled Towards Better Accountability. In his report the auditor makes mention of many investigations he has done over the years and many indications of areas where he thought improvements needed to be made.

I think we in this Legislature can all be proud that many of the new pieces of legislation that have been brought forward by our government have been recognized by the Provincial Auditor as responding to concerns he has raised for many, many years. Those include Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor, which, as he says, is largely consistent with principles that he put forward suggesting proposed amendments to the Audit Act, opening up recommendations and areas that he will be able to examine further. He indicates that Bill 18 generally addresses the areas of the current Audit Act that he felt required amendment.

1540

Similarly, he talks about the fact that Bill 25, with respect to government advertising, is a positive change and again a response to areas that he has raised criticism over in the past.

We also put forward pieces of legislation, Bill 86 and Bill 84, which again will increase transparency and accountability and which are currently before the Legislature.

So those, among compliments with respect to Bill 8 and with respect to the other legislation put forward in the education sector, are highlighted today in the auditor's report and give us a clear indication of the need

for transparency and accountability in our sectors across government. Those are some of the things that we are moving forward with.

The last point I want to make is how proud I was to have Tommy Douglas named as the greatest Canadian. For those of you in this Legislature who have been perhaps asleep for the last year, you would not know, but I was born in the same small town that Tommy Douglas hails from. Certainly Tommy Douglas is recognized as the greatest Canadian because he is the founder of something that Canadians value most. I'll just quote a little bit from an article by Roy Romanow today:

"In the early 1960s, Tommy Douglas and his colleagues combined a clarity of vision regarding health care with a truly uncommon strength of purpose in staring down the doctors in my province," Saskatchewan.

"Most of the medical establishment clung tenaciously to the status quo. We lived through a difficult and emotional doctors' strike, which, in the short run, divided our province.

"But Douglas and his colleagues stayed the course. They chose the untravelled and bumpy road to a better future. Today, Canada has medicare."

In that very same article, Roy Romanow, who, as we all know, has spent a lot of time helping us with our health care system, talks about how our government currently "has an opportunity to write the newest chapter to strengthen and preserve medicare." I can tell you that I am very proud to be part of a government who will be steadfast, who will have the clarity of vision that Tommy Douglas had. We will protect medicare for future generations, and I look forward to that day.

I will now share my time with my colleague.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore for sharing her time with me and offering me an opportunity to make a comment about the greatest Canadian. I just want everyone to know and realize that, with no disrespect to Don Cherry, we had Alexander Graham Bell from Brant, and we also had Wayne Gretzky. I can't for the life of me figure out how Don Cherry—with no disrespect—beat out Wayne Gretzky. Anyway, two out of the top 10 is a great thing to have from our riding. And by the way, we had a tremendous number of other great Canadians. Dr James Hillier, who's still alive, invented the electron microscope—unbelievable.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): How about Ron Johnson?

Mr Levac: Who? Thank you.

Speaker, I will be very brief in terms of my support for Bill 149. I want to be sure that everyone understands that the bill itself, Bill 149, is not the be-all and end-all of tax reform; it's not the be-all and end-all of financial and fiscal responsibility. But what's important to point out is that it is part of an overall plan for our government to build a stronger, prosperous, and more modified economy. If you take a look at some of the things that we're proposing inside the bill, it's to take those plans and turn them into a reality. This is building. This is part of the building process that we're talking about.

What we also want to do is, we're transforming the health care system and the education system. What we're also doing is making sure that we have, as much as possible, greater transparency and accountability. We're taking those steps one by one, but we're adding to the plan. Bill 149 does indeed do just that. Let's take a look at some of the key components that are mentioned in 149.

Eliminating the capital tax: By eliminating the capital tax, we're allowing our economy to prosper and grow. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and indeed the meetings that I've had with the Brantford Chamber of Commerce, have indicated that a tax on a tax is very regressive, and that's exactly what a capital tax is all about. It's taxing money that's already taxed, so it's a tax on a tax and it's regressive. I will suggest that there was mention of this previously, but action was not taken on it. Now that we are doing so, we're making sure that the capital tax is eliminated by the year 2012.

Another action that we're taking here is creating the commercialization investment funds program. What's important to note is that it would provide a maximum of up to \$36 million to universities, colleges and hospitals, and the assistance to leverage up to \$120 million of new pools of seed money in order for us to spin off technology companies that are formed by faculty and staff—and students, by the way; we want to include that because they are part of that research as well.

There are many examples across the province, in particular in southwestern Ontario, in our universities, where faculty and staff members and students have spun off other industries that create great opportunities for us in the investment area.

The apprenticeship tax credit is really important. I want to suggest to you that there is a local initiative in my riding that I've been a partner of for quite some time, even before I was elected, called the Brant Skills Development Group. Industry itself formed this group in order for us, along with educators, to start addressing the skills shortage issue. We all know in this House that that is a major issue, and this government is taking steps, along with previous governments that have taken steps before, to start to identify this, but we're meeting that point where the rubber has to hit the road. We are in crisis mode when it comes to skilled trades. The trades out there are asking us for that. We've got foreign-trained skilled workers and locally trained skilled workers. We've got to get that moving for us to be more economically viable for our companies and corporations. We've just got to be able to keep up technologically.

There are several other issues about which I have made a commitment to be as brief as possible, and sometimes for politicians that's pretty hard to do. I want to end by saying that with this property tax credit that has been mentioned for senior citizens, one of the things it is important to point out is that many of the senior citizens in my riding were talking about the previous government's attempt to do a tax credit on the back of education. It was not accepted. They saw that they were responsible for education as well. They said that when

they were growing up and had their kids, they paid their fair share of taxes and they didn't want the credit. What they wanted was simply a credit for themselves, and what's going happen with this? It's \$125 more in the pockets of 685,000 low- and middle-income seniors this year, and for every single year after that.

We're proposing that it provide a fee waiver to allow most of the vulnerable to have access to our justice system in our society. There are many aspects of this bill that we could go into. All I'm going to suggest is that Bill 149 is part of an overall plan that we've laid out in terms of our being a more prosperous province. I look forward to the passage of this bill if this Legislature sees fit.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr Wilson: I have a two-minute response.

Ms Churley: No, they're not done yet; they've got—

Mr Wilson: Sorry, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: I'm sorry.

Mr Wilson: Thank you, Mr Speaker; the quasi-Speaker over here has been very helpful.

Ms Churley: Well, they haven't used up all their time.

Mr Wilson: I want to comment on the comments from the members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Brampton, particularly the member for Brant's comments about the property tax credit, which the government is boosting to \$625. I want to remind the seniors at home that we were going to give seniors an additional \$400. We called it a \$400 tax credit—actually it wasn't a tax credit; it was going to be a \$400 grant, giving you money back from the education portion of your property taxes. We called it that, but it really could be called just a \$400 seniors tax grant.

The reason we brought that in was that not everyone benefited from our 30%, on average, income tax cut over the years we were in government, over the eight years we implemented the largest reductions in personal income tax ever in the province. Not every low-income or middle-income senior benefited during that time, because in those senior years you may not have a large income. You probably are retired and you probably have some investments coming in, if you're lucky, but you don't have a big income stream, so you didn't benefit from the Mike Harris or Ernie Eves tax cuts.

We heard that criticism from the Liberals, who were in opposition at the time, and from the NDP, saying we were leaving out middle- and low-income seniors. So whatever way you called it, whether it was an education tax credit or grant, we were going to give \$400 more. Now, of course, the Liberal government in their first budget cancelled that tax cut for seniors. They cancelled it, and now they have the gall to bring in this budget bill and only give seniors \$125 more when they could have got \$400 more. We wanted to be sure we brought in full fairness with our Mike Harris-Ernie Eves tax cuts, and made sure that seniors, who may not have a revenue stream or a very large income revenue stream in their latter years, could benefit.

So now I'm appalled that the Liberals, who believe in helping low- and middle-income seniors, are actually cancelling that very beneficial tax grant to seniors.

1550

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth.

Ms Churley: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I see you are very lenient on the time. I appreciate that.

I'm not surprised that Liberal members are raising today the fact that Tommy Douglas, former CCFer, won as the greatest Canadian last night. I think it just goes to show how much Canadians value their health care system. I'm friends with Shirley Douglas, Tommy Douglas's daughter, and I have to say she's out there fighting the Liberals on the P3s. The Liberals said they wouldn't continue with the Tory public-private partnerships in hospitals, and Shirley Douglas is out there fighting that. I have to tell you, I don't believe Tommy Douglas would approve of what's going on under the Liberals now, in terms of the public-private partnerships that are continuing with hospitals.

I also have to say I don't think Tommy Douglas would approve of the regressive health tax that is going directly to lower-income people. That is a result of the new regressive health tax the Liberals brought in. I think we all agree that more money had to be found to put in the health care system because it is so valuable to people, but this is the wrong way to go about it.

The other thing I want to talk about briefly is that I'm surprised one of the members spoke about the elimination of the capital tax. I would say that's probably the thing, out of this massive bill, that they want to highlight least, because in the campaign that's something the Liberals campaigned against. They said they would not support the Tories' promise to keep the tax. When the tax is completely eliminated in 2012, it will take out approximately \$1 billion, and this is at the same time they are bringing in regressive health taxes for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Ms Churley: The previous Speaker was very lenient—

The Acting Speaker: And he did a much better job than I'm doing, I'm sure. However, I'm charged with the responsibility of being here now. The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It is a privilege to rise regarding Bill 149, the fall budget bill, which, we appreciate, is actually quite massive. There are a number of components. We've been inundated with some of the paperwork that's gone through with it. But if you consider it from a broader perspective, there are a number of aspects included—fiscal prudence en route to transforming Ontario, transparency and accountability—all of which are really being brought to bear to better the economic prosperity of Ontario, which ultimately, as you'll appreciate, Speaker, is the foundation of a just and civil society.

As a number of my colleagues have highlighted—for example, my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore quite rightly pointed out the very deep steps being made, for the first time within living memory, I might say, with regard to the apprenticeship training tax credit. There are a number of other aspects in this bill. For example, we are respecting seniors with regard to the restoration of their property tax credit. There are also initiatives for northern Ontarians, with the northern Ontario grow bonds.

In summary, in the limited time I have—45 seconds and counting—I can say it is a broad-perspective bill. It's a bill that addresses a number of different issues and pulls a number of different levers within the power the government has with regard to fiscal management and building further prosperity in Ontario, as well as making Ontario and its accounts more transparent. There are a number of things that I'll be able to speak to later.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today and make a few comments on the speech by the member for Brant. I think it's important that we try to identify what we, as the opposition, consider the problems are with this bill, why we won't support it and why the government in all likelihood will have to time-allocate it.

There are two things I am really concerned about when we talk about building a strong economy and creating jobs and a prosperous future in our province. One is the fact that this government is now eliminating the Ontario home ownership savings plan. I believe that's been one of the most positive steps for young people building and buying their first new home. They will have to adjust to not having that.

You say that a house is \$180,000 or \$190,000 or \$225,000 or \$230,000, and people would probably say, "What's \$2,000?" Well, for a young couple, \$2,000 could possibly buy that first washer and dryer or some improvements to the house as an investment. It may be, for people purchasing their first new home, what really puts them over the top. That has been a very good incentive for the citizens of our province, as we have seen literally tens of thousands of new homes built across our province in the last eight or nine years. What is the result of that? Vacancy rates have gone up in apartments, which has been another good sign right across our province.

So that is a huge disappointment to our government. We just can't believe that they're actually doing this as we're starting to see a downturn in the economy. The loss of new construction jobs and new building permits is taking place right now. We're actually going to see a 12% decrease next year.

The Acting Speaker: One of the government members has two minutes to reply.

Ms Broten: I want to thank the members for Simcoe-Grey, Etobicoke North, Simcoe North and Toronto-Danforth for their comments.

Perhaps I'll just make reference to where my friend left off, that this is part of a comprehensive plan, a plan where we know we need to balance the budget, provide accountability and protect our vital public services. Eliminating the capital tax credit is part of a government strategy to encourage economic growth. We're doing it in a fiscally prudent fashion. So again, that's one part of our plan.

Making sure that we deal with seniors fairly and enable them to stay in their homes and demonstrate our support for them is another part of this bill. But I tell you that ensuring seniors live safely in their homes and with dignity is not something we are prepared to do on the back of the education system. Unlike previous governments, we believe in public education. We are going to ensure that public education is there in the future, and we're not going to give a benefit on the back of that system.

With respect to health care, I guess I respond that we are taking the brave step. Perhaps some day, when history is repeating itself and we are on the precipice of making a determination of whether in this province we continue to protect medicare and ensure that it is sustainable for generations to come, we won't acknowledge that we are in an historical moment. But if we look at the battles that have taken place in the history of this province and across this country to protect and foster medicare, I say to you, we are on the precipice of that.

Our government has the opportunity to rewrite the newest chapter, and we are going to take the brave step of embracing the kind of change that we need in this province to make sure we strengthen and sustain medicare for generations to come. I think Tommy Douglas would be very proud of that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to join in the debate on the bill and to discuss some of the shortcomings that I and, of course, our colleagues across the way in the official opposition see in the bill.

I know that members are listening raptly to my presentation, but those who may not stick around for the full 20 minutes, I tell you, we're voting against this bill. I mean, how can we support this?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): No.

Mr Hudak: Well, I didn't want to spoil the conclusion of my remarks, but I know some of you have other tasks to get to.

But to cut to the chase, so to speak, I say to my colleague from Don Valley East, we will not be supporting this bill.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: One simple reason: You're increasing taxes. You're increasing taxes several times in this bill. I'm going to have to pause here. There are three, four—what is it?—about 11 different tax increases that our hard-working researchers at PC researching services have uncovered in this bill—and my colleagues in support. There are 11 separate tax hikes.

I hate to beat a dead horse, but Dalton McGuinty did say during the campaign that he would not be raising taxes on Ontario working families. He looked into the TV camera and said, "I won't be raising your taxes." Now, maybe my screen wasn't big enough. He may have had his fingers crossed beneath the screen. Maybe I needed one of those high-definition televisions to see the little asterisk that was above his head, maybe to the right, where it said, "He doesn't really mean it. Once he gets in office, he's going to break all those promises." Maybe I missed that.

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But I wasn't the only one who missed it. I would think that hundreds of thousand of people who voted for Dalton McGuinty probably did so, thinking he was going to keep his promises, and very importantly, keep one of his major promises: not to increase taxes. But, shortly after he got the keys to the Premier's limousine, he took his campaign promises, tossed them out the window and since that time has broken, I think, more than 40 different campaign promises. In this particular piece of legislation we see a number of tax increases by the cancellation of a number of tax credits.

Let me read a few of them to you. My friend from Simcoe North just talked about the elimination of the Ontario home ownership savings plan, OHOSP. This was an important method for young people moving out of home, young married couples, individuals looking to own their own home as opposed to paying rent, to make that investment in their own property, their own real estate. This would help them achieve that own home, that Canadian dream of having their own space, their own home.

I know some members opposite have said, "Well, it's really not that much money," but it can be. It certainly is. I think for a young couple buying their first home, a young person just graduated from university or college getting her first job, buying her first home, certainly \$1,000 to \$2,000 toward that can be a substantial amount of money to help make that important first purchase.

This bill also eliminates the workplace child care tax incentive, which we equate to about a \$10-million tax hike on the backs of working Ontarians.

The workplace accessibility tax incentive would be eliminated by this bill, if passed—a tax hike of about \$7 million.

The graduate transitions tax credit—eliminated—helping graduates find those jobs, meet with their training and education: scrapped as part of this bill.

The educational technology tax credit: I know my colleague from Durham has been looking into this area, particularly with reference to medical technology and equipment. The educational technology tax credit, which helped investments in that area, would be scrapped if this bill were to pass.

The employer health tax exemption and the stock option benefits for R&D employees would also be eliminated if this bill were to pass, meaning that these employees would be paying higher taxes because the

employer health tax would cover a larger portion of their pay and benefits—nothing but a hidden tax grab by the Minister of Finance on top of assorted other tax increases. In fact, I think one of the first bills brought in by the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government was the biggest tax hike in the history of Ontario.

To go on with the tax increases in this bill, the Ontario research employees stock option tax credit is eliminated.

Provincial "sales tax ... rebate for vehicles purchased" by those with disabilities—an \$8-million saving the finance minister is clawing back from families or individuals with disabilities who are trying to purchase a vehicle to help them get to work, to social functions and to church. This is for vehicles that have been modified to help individuals who have difficulty moving around. They need a wheelchair or such to help them live as much of an independent lifestyle as possible by their condition. Bizarrely, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government are taking that tax credit away from these families to find \$8 million in savings, I guess, but at a substantial cost, a substantial impact on these families.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Mean-spirited.

Mr Hudak: It is absolutely. My colleague from Halton says it's mean-spirited—absolutely mean-spirited.

I was in Sobeys in Beamsville, just off Green Lane and Ontario Street, about two or three weeks ago and a nice elderly gentleman approached me in the grocery store lineup. He didn't want to bother me, but he said he had something on his mind, and of course I said, "Let me hear what it is." His wife has severe disabilities. She has been in and out of the hospital, sadly, on many occasions. They had recently purchased a vehicle so they could transport her to her medical appointments, to her social occasions—the gentleman was retired, so it wouldn't be to work, but to important aspects that support their lifestyle in the community of Beamsville. Her medical appointments are in St Catharines or Hamilton.

Then he finds out that Greg Sorbara, the Minister of Finance in the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government, in a mean-spirited way, has taken away that tax credit which made that car more affordable for that couple, for those seniors. I think the gentleman missed it by just a few days. He wrote to Premier McGuinty, and he gave me a copy of his letter, but he was snubbed by the Premier, who basically said he wasn't going to help him. He was not going to assist this pair of seniors—and the wife has severe disabilities—to pay for the car. They had depended on this tax credit—eliminated in this particular bill.

I'll go on. The 10-year property tax exemption for new electricity generating facilities strikes me as very curious. Today, my colleague from Durham asked the Minister of Energy if he was going to break his promise of closing the coal-fired plants by 2007, a very legitimate question by the member because, as I've said and I'll say again, this government has a shocking record of breaking campaign promises, so you sort of expect they're going to break more.

I also believe that was an irresponsible promise made by a man who was so ambitious to sit in the Premier's

chair that he didn't care about the dignity of the office. He made promises he knew he couldn't keep. I am convinced of that and I believe the vast majority of Ontarians are convinced of that as well. It fits well on a bumper sticker, but I bet you that the Premier knew he couldn't keep that promise, considering the increasing demand for hydro in Ontario and the fact that there were not as many as hoped capital projects for new power supply moving through the system. The Premier knew that if he closed down the coal-fired plants by 2007, it would cause a major hole in hydro supply in the province. It's potentially 20% or more. Then, if that power were to be imported, probably a significant portion would come from the Ohio Valley, from across the border, where the coal technology is not as clean. So we would be importing power from across the border and importing the pollution that would come across Lake Erie into the province.

I do believe they thought the promise through, knew it was irresponsible and unworkable, but nonetheless put it in their campaign material to try to win votes. It's certainly a laudable goal to continue to clean up our atmosphere, one we support—a clean environment. In order to try to attract those votes, the Premier made an irresponsible promise that's unworkable, and he knew he couldn't keep it.

I believe it's a matter of time. I believe there are probably informal polls in the hydro sector, and Dwight Duncan is going to say, "Oops, you know what? We're not going to close down all the coal-fired plants by 2007, as promised. We just can't do it." He'll try to find some spin, some way of saying it's not his fault. But they knew years ago when they made that promise that they were not going to carry through on it.

Nonetheless, if there is sincerity in that promise, you'd think they would do what they could to encourage new power supply. So I find it very curious and absolutely inconsistent that this government is eliminating the property tax exemption for new electricity generating facilities. If you tax something, you'll get less of it, on principle; if you reduce taxes, you'll get more of it. If you want to encourage more hydro supply in Ontario, one way of doing so is to reduce taxes on those facilities. It's been successful in other jurisdictions. So if the government on one hand says they want to encourage new supply, why on the other are they effectively raising taxes on these hydro facilities through this bill before the Legislature today?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): That would be discouraging, eh?

Mr Hudak: My friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke says that would be discouraging. Absolutely. It is discouraging that this government continues in public with what I believe is the mirage of their power supply plans, when behind the scenes they're counting down the days when they're going to break the promise on closing the coal-fired plants.

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Representing Dunnville in Haldimand county, parts of western Niagara and a significant number of individuals

who work at the Nanticoke facility, I know that the devastation on an economic level that closing that facility will cause is immeasurable. I don't know if other promises were made to replace that supply in Nanticoke; I don't believe that's the case. Certainly, I believe it's bad hydro policy for the government to pursue that tack and I believe it's bad economic policy for Haldimand and Norfolk counties. I know my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has spoken very eloquently about that in the House and during the campaign.

Similarly, the tax incentive for new alternative renewable electricity supply is repealed retroactively to November 25, 2002. That was more than two years ago. A retroactive tax increase of over two years.

When we read through this legislation and the amendments to the Electricity Act that are part of this bill—I've mentioned a couple of initiatives that are increasing taxes on hydro supply, which seems to run against the grain of what any sensible government would do. The amendments to the Electricity Act basically open the door for the government to levy charges for water use on the owners of hydroelectric generating stations. Under the revised act, water transfers can now be taken into account when the government calculates revenue charges and water rental charges. A good question—and I hope somebody across the way responds—is, why would the government slap this tax on the water being used by hydroelectric generating stations? Is that how they intend to attract new hydro generation plants to Ontario? It seems to work absolutely the opposite.

Mr Yakabuski: They're working to get the price up higher and higher.

Mr Hudak: I'm certainly hearing what the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is saying from my constituents, who are seeing their hydro rates increase.

By the way, I seem to recall, around the same time as Dalton McGuinty promised not to raise taxes, they promised not to raise hydro rates. Boy, that one has gone out the window, big time, and the minister continues to talk about further increases in hydro rates. Certainly, higher taxation on hydroelectric generating stations seems to be absolutely at cross-purposes with what the government purports to do, which is increasing energy supply.

Speaking of hydroelectric, there's another broken promise made to the people of Niagara Falls and Niagara in particular: Dalton McGuinty and Energy Minister Dwight Duncan said here in the Legislature that they were going to build Beck 3, which would be the third generator in Niagara Falls for hydro supply—a significant source of power. There are two right now. They're moving ahead with a project that the Conservative government began, increasing the capacity of the tunnel. That's great. That's the right thing to do. But they had promised to go beyond that and build the third generator, Beck 3.

Mr Yakabuski: Not happening.

Mr Hudak: The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke rightly guesses it's not happening. I think he's

seen this sad story too many times before, where a promise is made and then, once in office, that promise is quickly broken by this government, and they try to forget it.

We had a very curious, bizarre answer as to why the Minister of Energy backed away from Beck 3, I think it was in early 2004, while Dalton McGuinty was promising it in 2003. I think it had something to do with lower water levels in the Niagara River. So I guess there was a massive and demonstrable change in the water levels in the Niagara River that only the Liberal Party operatives are aware of. Certainly my constituents who live along the Niagara River have not seen this massive lowering of the river. I guess they could walk across to Buffalo, New York, or to Grand Island now. But I guess something happened with the Niagara River, so Beck—

Mr Yakabuski: Is Moses parked on either side of that river?

Mr Hudak: Maybe Moses has a part-time job lowering the level of the Niagara River for a change, instead of the Red Sea.

Mr Yakabuski: Is he parting waters up in your region now?

Mr Hudak: I don't know, but for some reason the government has broken that promise under one bizarre story that the water levels in the Niagara River are suddenly precipitously lower than they were only one year before. It's a bunch of bunk. Another clearly broken promise by the Dalton McGuinty government.

Mr Yakabuski: Well, you can't say they're not consistent.

Mr Hudak: It's true. I mean, they are consistent. It's just saddening, and I think it pulls all politicians down, unfortunately. The broken promises continue to stack up, and we're seeing a number of them in this bill that's before the Legislature today.

I also wanted to comment on the elimination of the Muskoka region from the boundaries of northern Ontario, the Parry Sound-Muskoka riding.

Mr Yakabuski: That wouldn't be a political decision?

Mr Hudak: You know, it is absolutely a political decision. It is meant to punish the people of that riding that supported a Conservative candidate, a very good Conservative candidate, Norm Miller. It is nothing but a vindictive move by the government, and that means that people in this riding who before could access additional funding to attract doctors as part of the northern Ontario program, could capitalize on the grow bonds initiatives as part of this, could get funding, as they have for many years, from the northern Ontario heritage fund, can no longer do so. The federal boundaries include the whole riding.

Mr Yakabuski: They still respect those boundaries.

Mr Hudak: They still respect those boundaries, and in fact the federal candidate, now agriculture minister, I think, had condemned the Dalton McGuinty government for this vindictive, mean-spirited attack on the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka simply because they voted Conservative. That's one of the underlying patterns that

we've seen: a mean-spiritedness, a vindictiveness. I talked about it with Halton's comments a bit earlier with respect to northern Ontario.

Certainly the attack on parents who send their kids to independent schools—middle-class families who had been depending for 11 months on receiving their tax credit, who choose to send their children to independent schools while paying taxes to the public school system, find out 11 months into the year that their tax credit is eliminated retroactive to January 1. Maybe if they did it the next year they would disagree with it, but they could understand. But it's an absolutely mean-spirited, spiteful, vindictive attack on parents who send their children to independent schools by an 11-month retroactive tax increase.

I do believe there have been some attacks on the Ontario Hotel Restaurant and Motel Association. They had the courage—the first real stakeholder group that had the courage—to stand up to the Dalton McGuinty government when they opposed the short-lived Dalton McGuinty meal tax, which would have increased taxes on meals under \$5, was it?

Mr Yakabuski: Under \$4.

Mr Hudak: Under \$4—dramatically affecting seniors and working families.

The restaurant, hotel and motel association came up with a campaign widely responded to by taxpayers, and caused the McGuinty government to back down from that poorly-thought-out attempt to grab additional taxes from restaurateurs, seniors and working families. I do believe some of the initiatives that we've seen hence, that have come after that, are part of a vindictive pattern of this government to punish those who stand up against them.

Lately, the Ontario Medical Association, which voted fairly on a deal and voted it down by about 60%—they had fair consideration, a month-plus—I forget what the exact time frame was, but a considerable amount of time—maybe even 90 days. They voted it down after considering it, and the government now has turned around and, in a vindictive, mean-spirited manner, is maligning doctors, attacking senior doctors, negotiating in public in bad faith, and calling doctors some very unflattering terms. It's a shameful attack on our doctors and shows an unfortunate vindictiveness and mean-spiritedness underlying a number of initiatives like this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Prue: As always, it's a pleasure to comment on the speeches made by the member from Erie-Lincoln. Again, as I have to say so many times, although I do not agree always with what he says, he says it with some eloquence.

I think a couple of points that he raised here need to be spoken about again. He talked about politicians, in general, from all parties, who break their promises, politicians who betray the trust of the people who sent them to Queen's Park or to any Legislature, or to the federal government or to a city hall. When politicians

break the trust they have, or that the people have with them, then I would tell you that they have done something far worse than simply betray the people. They have broken a covenant that all politicians must have with the people who send them to any elected place of office. Your word should be your bond. What you say you're going to do, you should carry out. He is right in saying that we as politicians ought never to willingly break that bond. Even if there are circumstances that may require us from time to time to change our mind, we should tread very carefully before we break the promises we have made.

He also talked about the constituency of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and I've not yet spoken on this, but I think he is absolutely right. Parry Sound-Muskoka has for many years been considered part of northern Ontario. As part of the north, it was eligible for subsidies, for government largesse, and it was treated as a northern part of the province. To take it out of the north, for no apparent reason that anyone can fathom or understand, is to do a disservice not only to the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka but to the 100,000 or so people who live there.

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Mr Lalonde: I was listening very carefully to the comments made by the member for Erie-Lincoln. I'd like to inform the people properly in this province. When he referred to the disabled, when he referred to the seniors, first of all, this bill will not only benefit seniors in one way, not only by that \$125; seniors will benefit up to \$525 a year. A good example is the special health tax we implemented because the previous government gave us that beautiful deficit of \$5.6 billion that we have to fund. Seniors, at the present time, if they are making taxable income of \$20,100, will benefit because they are going to fall under that \$20,000, which will benefit them by saving that \$300.

Also, when they purchase their drugs under the drug program, there's a cap. If you make more than a certain amount a year, instead of paying \$2 per prescription, you pay \$6, plus \$100. This will bring down a lot of seniors in the province who will benefit from that \$2 instead of the \$6.

When we look at the disabled, it's definitely not a saving to the province of \$8 million. In the past, they were getting a tax break when they purchased an automobile. Today the McGuinty government is investing in upgrading the automobile to accommodate the disabled.

This is the answer about what we're doing at the present time.

Mr Yakabuski: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Erie-Lincoln. He's a wise member of this House who has some very interesting ways of presenting his case. I support everything he's been saying. It's amazing, the correlation between the making of a promise and the breaking of a promise. What's that thing they used to talk about on that show, *Mork and Mindy*? A nanosecond? Apparently that's not the shortest measurement of time now. The shortest measurement of time is the time between the making of a promise and the

breaking of a promise by Dalton McGuinty. So they've got a new way of measuring time, and that's interesting.

I also found interesting, in listening to the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, that only Liberals could find ways of defending this health tax. It appears now they're going to be out campaigning and canvassing and trying to convince the public that, by putting our hands in your pockets and removing your hard-earned dollars that you cannot afford to give us, we're actually doing you a big favour. Only Liberals would think they somehow have a valid argument in that case.

Getting back to the member for Erie-Lincoln, he talked about a number of broken promises the Liberals have embarked upon since their election last October, and the broken promises to come. He talked about the plan to shut down the coal generating stations by 2007, and we're waiting to see when that axe is going to fall because it is simply impossible for them to be able to replace that amount of energy in that short a length of time.

Ms Churley: I find it very interesting watching Liberals speak and then Tories speak, and look for the similarities.

One of the things I would really like to point out here is the capital tax elimination. That's a tax that, when the Tories were in power, they said they were going to bring in and the Liberals said they weren't going to do. They campaigned against it.

Now, as Michael Prue, our finance critic, the member for Beaches-East York, pointed out yesterday, I believe, when he spoke to this bill, the Liberals were like slowed-down Tories, or something like this, because the Tories are complaining that the Liberals aren't doing it fast enough—not fast enough. I see some of the Liberals glaring at me over there. You don't mean to glare at me. But it's true. You're doing the same thing, and you said you weren't going to.

We want people out there to understand what this means. As the member for Beaches-East York pointed out yesterday, we're not talking about some of our industry here, some of our car manufacturers or whatever, we're talking about the elimination of this capital tax that mainly benefited—not entirely—banks. The big banks are getting this break, the big banks and insurance companies.

At the same time, the Liberals have not clawed back the child tax credit from the federal government, which would help people trying to raise their kids in poverty, but are giving the banks and insurance companies this huge break.

And they're not keeping their promise to the film industry. I will be talking about that a great deal when I speak to this bill in a moment—we desperately need that promise kept. In the meantime, they're bringing in a huge tax break for big banks and big insurance companies. What's wrong with this picture?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: I thank my colleagues for their comments.

One thing that I wanted to pursue—actually Beaches-East York added to this debate, and I appreciate his kind words and share them in respect to his work in the Legislature. He's right on with respect to northern Ontario. Taking Muskoka out of the definition of northern Ontario means that the taxpayers of Muskoka—and if you look at the year-round residents, the Liberal government likes to characterize them as all living in mansion-like cottages along the lakes, but I believe there's lower-than-average income for the average person working there, significantly high unemployment in the off-season and probably an older-than-average population. Basically, what this bill does is it means that people in that area can no longer get important programs like the northern Ontario health travel grant, which, if they had to come for surgery in Toronto, helps to pay those costs, helps to defray those costs: gone under this legislation.

Special funds that recruit doctors or specialists to the Muskoka region: gone under this legislation.

Access to the northern Ontario heritage fund, which is there to spur job creation and investment in northern Ontario: that access now denied.

I know my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka was fighting like a dog to make sure projects that exist, like the Gravenhurst Wharf, continue to help bring tourism and investment into that community.

I find this highly regrettable. As I said, the federal boundaries include the district of Muskoka. In fact, the federal member for that area, Mr Mitchell, who is now the agriculture minister, a respected individual in his riding and the north, had severely criticized, lambasted, the Dalton McGuinty government's decision to take Muskoka out of northern Ontario.

I have no doubt that was a vindictive move, it was mean-spirited and it appeals to the most base instinct by saying, "If we take money away from these people, we'll send it into the northern ridings that voted Liberal." It's highly regrettable. I hope they reverse that change.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: I have an opportunity to put my comments on the record about this bill before us today. I haven't had the opportunity, like our critic in this area, Michael Prue, to read that. Do you have a copy? I mean, it's about this thick. I couldn't believe it.

Mr Hudak: The ominous bill.

Ms Churley: The omnibus bill?

Mr Hudak: Ominous.

Ms Churley: Ominous. The ominous bill. Yes, it is ominous indeed.

Mr Prue: It contains little shocks of horror.

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Ms Churley: Yes, it does. As the member for Beaches-East York said, it contains little shocks of horror. He mentioned that on the day it was put before him in the House—about this thick—on his desk. He barely had time to look at it, but within that short period of time, just peering through it he found one or two little horrors at that time.

We've had it for—what?—about a week or so. I know he attended an hour-long technical briefing and he talked a bit about that yesterday. I think we need some plain language in these bills, don't you? Some of this stuff is outrageous. When I was the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, many years ago now, one of the things we started working on was plain language policies throughout the government. It seems to me that, after looking at this bill and other bills just in terms of understanding them, it is hard for us. We need interpretation of them.

Mr Prue read out some of the language used in these bills, but think about the layperson trying to read this and understand what it says. I have to hand it to my colleague, our critic in this area. He did a pretty good job, along with some of our incredible staff. Of course, behind every good or great politician there are really good staff too, who spend a lot of the time, when we're in here debating and asking questions and at our community meetings, poring over this information and interpreting and advising us. I want to thank all of them, as well as Mr Prue, for the work they did on this incredibly thick bill.

As always in these kinds of omnibus bills, there is a lot of housekeeping. You really do have to plow through it to figure out what is significant and what isn't. There actually are a fair number of significant things going on in this bill, which my colleague pointed out and others will be talking about as well. I'm focusing on a couple of areas because I'm just so outraged about them.

The one I keep talking about over and over again is the elimination of the capital tax. I really want to make sure that people out there understand what this means. If you are not paying attention to this, and there is so much else going on, the backdrop here is the new health tax that has been brought in for lower income people, and the government not eliminating the clawback, and all kinds of other things—the delisting of critical medical services. This is the backdrop to this. We have to put some of those things in place when we talk about this elimination of the capital tax.

The elimination of this capital tax is completely contrary to the government's campaign promise to keep the tax. I don't know what number this broken promise is—it's up in the 30s now, maybe even more—but to me this is a really significant one because of the backdrop and because of the people who are asked to pay the price. I get angry when I see that the elimination of this capital tax will cost the Ontario treasury approximately \$1 billion when the tax is completely eliminated in 2012. Why would the Liberals oppose this in opposition and then bring it in, particularly when we find out who is benefiting from this? It's the big banks and insurance companies.

I don't have to go into detail for anybody in this chamber or anybody who might be watching about the fees that we pay and pay when we go to the bank or to a bank machine these days. Their profits are rolling in, and we can't do anything about it unless we want to go back

to the days of stuffing our money in mattresses. I've got to tell you, some days when I go to my bank machine, it's tempting.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): If you have a waterbed—

Ms Churley: You couldn't do it if you have a waterbed. But seriously, those are the people who are going to benefit from this: the big banks who make billions of dollars of profits and the insurance companies. Surely they can afford to pay this little bit of extra money, given the huge ratio of profits they make, when we look at some of the poverty we see in our communities that has not been addressed.

I also want to talk at this time and within this context about the film industry. I've raised the question along with my colleagues, our critic Rosario Marchese and Michael Prue, my two Toronto colleagues in the NDP caucus. We raised it in the House, and indeed I've met with and will continue to meet with people representing the film industry: Film Ontario, a coalition of all the components who work within the film industry—they've all come together to work and to speak with the same voice to try to get the government to keep its promise to the film industry.

I plowed through this bill and asked people to look—because this would be the perfect place to do it—for the Liberals to keep their promise to the film industry and increase the tax incentives they promised to give them domestically. I raise this because they are not asking for very much. They are asking the Liberals to keep their promise, which we have in writing. They're not even asking to go to the top—say, as high a tax credit as Manitoba. They're asking to be put somewhere in the middle so they can compete.

The fact is that the film and television industry employs some 50,000 people, most of them here in Toronto, although the spinoff industry affects jobs right across the province, and a lot of them in my riding of Toronto-Danforth. Three of the major film studios in this province are situated in the port lands in my riding of Toronto-Danforth. Many of the people who work in that industry, from the carpenters to the producers to the caterers—you name it—live in the riding. They moved to the area so they're close to work. They're raising their kids there. Their kids go to school there. Do you know what? They're losing their jobs. Many of them are terrified of losing their jobs, and it doesn't have to be that way.

What people have to understand—it was very clear when we asked him the question in the House—is that the finance minister didn't understand how it benefits all of Ontario, and indeed his treasury, if that tax incentive is increased. It's one of those situations where it's win-win for everybody, because when you give that little bit extra tax incentive, what happens is more jobs, more producers, more work comes to these studios and more money goes back into the coffers. It's proven. It's on paper that at the end of the day, in very short order it actually benefits the treasury and, therefore, the bottom line of the government.

The minister did agree to a meeting with the film industry. I did meet with representatives from the industry, and we talked about what needed to be done. I know they are lobbying everybody from all parties and doing a good job of that. I know that my conversation with Mr Sorbara was a good one in terms of demanding that he meet with them. First of all he said he probably couldn't do it until after the budget. I said, "That's not good enough. They need to meet with you now." I understand that his assistant did call, or they called him immediately, and a meeting was set up in short order. I'm sure that when Mr Sorbara and others look at their data and their information, they will keep their promise, because there is no way not to. It just doesn't make sense to let the industry wither and die the way it's going to if this keeps up, if the promise isn't kept.

According to the latest government figures, the industry is in trouble. Foreign project filming in Ontario has declined by 36% or \$200 million in 2003. The number of domestic productions declined last year too. The film industry here is very worried that Ontario is becoming uncompetitive with other jurisdictions that are also trying to attract film and television productions, so they are upping their tax credits. That's what is happening in the US and provinces across Canada. When you couple that with the rising Canadian dollar and the incentives being offered by other jurisdictions, both in the US and Canada, it could be a disaster for a thriving industry here in Ontario.

When we asked Mr Sorbara the question—I believe I have his answer here—he said he didn't want to participate in an "unhealthy bidding war with upping and upping tax credits." That's not, may I say again, what the industry is asking for. They're not trying to get into that bidding war. They want to be somewhere in the middle. In fact, they have to be somewhere in the middle in order to compete. But he did say, "We are going to help generate the most skilled labour pool and talent pool ... on the continent in film and production. We're going to make sure we have a well-developed infrastructure so that everyone knows that the best films can be made in Ontario." We already have that in Ontario, right here in downtown Toronto, in my riding; that exists. We have one of the best talent pools in all of North America and indeed the entire world, and the best infrastructure.

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What is really alarming to me, because this has not been included in this bill, is that there was supposed to be a new film studio built in my riding that we're all very excited about. It means more jobs; it would mean more jobs for people. We want that studio to be built and all the people who are employed in the industry want it to be built. But now they're saying that if this continues to fall, they will not be able to build it, that it wouldn't make sense to build it. So we have three other studios that were thriving but are starting to lose ground significantly. Something can be done about it, and we ask the minister to do so.

To date, I think part of it is not having a really clear understanding of the industry. I'm sure his staff by now

will have been working away so they can go to him and show him what indeed we're talking about here and why it would be a win-win situation to include this tax credit in this bill. Since it isn't in here, we're looking forward to the minister coming forward very, very soon with the promise that they will move forward immediately. You see, what's happening by osmosis, you could say, the ripple effect, is that once the word gets out there throughout the industry that Ontario is losing ground in this way, that it costs more to come here, they will go elsewhere. That's what is happening right now. The longer we keep this situation as it is, without this tax credit being put in place as promised, the more business is going to be lost in my riding in Toronto and indeed throughout parts of Ontario.

I think it was Mr Prue once again who said—I like this quote: “Dalton McGuinty should be a director, because his government is overseeing a perfect storm for film and television jobs. After SARS, the higher Canadian dollar and improvements to tax credits in other jurisdictions, the Liberals have turned their backs on workers in the film and television industry.” It's very well said, I'll tell you that. I agree with it.

This is an extremely serious situation. We're not just talking. Some people think that when they hear us talk about the film industry, there are these producers and actors and they'll find work; who really cares about them? Well, in fact, I do for a number of reasons. But we also have to bear in mind that this is an industry like many other industries. We're talking about, as I said, 50,000 or so jobs. We're talking about all kinds of jobs that will be lost throughout the industry if this is not done. I was really disappointed when I looked at this bill and it wasn't in there.

It makes me particularly distraught to see that big banks and insurance companies are being given a tax credit here. These people who make a huge profit, billions of dollars, are getting another break here. But the film industry, which is desperate right now for support from the government, support that was promised by the government, gets zero; they get nothing. What is wrong with this picture?

You know that the film industry is coming down here tomorrow. They're going to be outside, on the lawn, and I'm sure they're going to be talking to Liberal members about their situation. I'm quite convinced that a number of the Liberals sitting here in this chamber today will agree with me, and will agree with them, that this is the proper thing to do, the right thing to do. It's a win-win for everybody. It's not often you can stand up in this place and say something like that, that giving this particular industry a slightly higher tax credit, this middle ground, will actually pay off for the government and more money will flow into the government coffers. How can you say no to an offer like that? So I'm looking forward to the film industry being here tomorrow, and of course I'm looking forward to the finance minister saying that he understands the issue now and indeed will keep the promise and raise those tax credits to 33% from 20%.

In my last couple of minutes on this bill, I do want to say that there are a number of issues here that we were not told about when we first got this bill before us. It was quite alarming to see, for instance, as I mentioned earlier, that in this bill the government is ending the PST rebate for modification of vehicles of handicapped drivers. For the life of me, I don't understand why the government is doing it. It's such a little program; not a lot of people utilized it. As we well know, Mr Prue had to help Mr Jason Chenier, who had applied through a legitimate government Web site and was turned down. He was able, through his tenacity, to get that for this particular gentleman. Others who had applied legitimately were turned down because the government had cancelled the program without telling people.

I don't understand how the government can bring in a disability act, even though it's going to take 20 years for people to see improvements, and cancel a small thing like that, which can be so significant to some people at this time, before we actually have the disability bill active in this province. What I understand now is that the monies are being reallocated to a March of Dimes program funded through the Ministry of Community and Social Services. As you know, that's a means-tested program and it doesn't benefit some people who are earning more than \$35,000. I can tell you that \$35,000, when you're raising a person or taking care of a person who has disabilities, is not very much money. So there is a real problem with that.

The other thing, one of the many things I was shocked to see, was that the PST rebate for energy-efficient appliances had expired. That was brought in by the Tories, actually. It was an itty-bitty program. I went for the announcement when the minister was down, and I actually even bought an energy-efficient dishwasher, I think it was, or dryer, and benefited a little bit. I got a rebate back from that. A lot of people didn't know about it.

Let me tell you why that program was important. It was a small program. I think a lot of people didn't know about it and should have been informed. But the government is saying that it has brought on a rebate for the purchase of residential solar systems and is introducing a rebate for wind energy systems, micro-hydroelectric energy systems and other kinds of systems. Well, that's great. I support that and applaud that. But a lot of people are not going to be rushing out right now to do something like that; they will, over time. We need to promote it more. But many people, as we are entering into more and more of an energy crises for a number of reasons, want to start small, or maybe they can only start small. This little program was an opportunity for ordinary people who were not going to be rushing out and getting into wind energy systems and things like that right away; it was something they could do. They were going to get a rebate, and it would be an incentive for them to do their bit to contribute to energy efficiency in this province. That motivation has been taken away from them.

Mr Speaker, I can see you're getting ready to jump up and sit me down, so I thank you for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?
1650

Mrs Mitchell: It's certainly my pleasure to rise this afternoon to support Bill 149, the Budget Measures Act. This bill will make our tax system fairer and stronger. As I have a limited amount of time, I want to speak to one very specific issue that is part of this bill, and that is the apprenticeship training tax credit. I want to talk about how difficult it has been in our rural communities for our skilled trades. In our rural communities, we do not have some of the opportunities that our urban counterparts have, but what we do have is very bright, young, energetic people, and they can bring forward many of their skills through skilled trades because of the lack of universities and manufacturing businesses within our communities. So this, for me, is a wonderful opportunity, for our rural communities to have the ability for our young people to have the training closer to them as well. This plan contains new funding of up to \$11.7 million annually by 2006-07 and would pay up to \$5,000 for three years. This means good jobs, good jobs for young people from our rural communities. So it is my pleasure to rise and support this bill.

This bill is making the necessary investments in our most important resource, and that is the people of Ontario. The strength of this bill is through our young people and into our future, so again, it is my pleasure to rise and support this bill.

Mr Yakabuski: I too want to comment on the bill again. I always appreciate the member for Toronto-Danforth. We don't always have the same philosophical points of view, but I do admire the way she tackles issues and sticks to her guns.

Mr Qaadri: Tell us about Mork and Mindy again.

Mr Yakabuski: No, no. Mork and Mindy—we switched the channel on that one.

But I wonder, when I think of this Liberal government—we see in this budget bill we've had increases in taxes in this province to the tune of about, for the average family, \$1,000. You know, general economics say if you put more money into people's pockets, the economy is going to be positively affected. The Liberals campaigned basically on the fact that they thought our taxes were too low. So they are raising our taxes. They said they wouldn't, but they are; they continue to raise the taxes over and over again. Now, I just wonder where they are. If there is any credence to that argument at all, have they actually thought about at what point they will have raised taxes to such a point that they drive this economy into a recession? I mean, there is a point where there will be no money at all left in a person's pocket. As a matter of fact, a constituent of mine said to me, "You know, when that Dalton McGuinty is through with me, the only thing that is going to be left in my pockets is lint."

Mr Qaadri: Is that a quote, John?

Mr Yakabuski: That is a quote. At that point, I ask this party, will you have realized that by raising taxes and raising taxes and raising taxes, you are succeeding in driving this economy down?

Mr Prue: I rise to commend the member from Beaches-East York for a most eloquent speech. She sort of hit the—

Ms Churley: Toronto-Danforth.

Mr Prue: Sorry. I'm Beaches-East York; you're Toronto-Danforth.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): But we'll commend you too.

Mr Prue: I'll commend myself as well. Sorry. She referred to me so many times that I got confused myself. But anyway, the member from Toronto-Danforth really—

Mr Wilson: She's better-looking.

Mr Prue: Oh, yes, she's much better-looking.

She really hit the nail on the head when she talked about the capital tax reductions and how this government is bent on going down the same path that the previous government was bent on, thinking that this was somehow going to do a good thing for the province of Ontario. The only thing it's going to do is a good thing for the banks and insurance companies.

It's not going to do a good thing—she zeroed in on one particular industry that is found primarily in Toronto but increasingly all over the province, and that is the film and television industry. They are really starting to be hit. They are not getting the kinds of funds they need, the kinds of funds that would be available if you stopped the capital tax reductions. If you had a billion dollars, would it not make more sense to take some of that money and put it into the film industry? Would it not make more sense than to leave them mired at a 20% rate? Where the government is subsidizing them at a very small rate, would it not make more sense to move it up to where Dalton McGuinty said it should be, in the last election, at 33%?

We have heard from the finance minister and from the Premier that this simply cannot be done because there isn't enough money. But at the same time, there seems to be enough money to completely eliminate the capital tax reduction to banks and insurance companies. It's going to cost this province about a billion dollars in the next seven years if you continue to embark on that, and I would say she's hit the nail on the head: It's better to spend it where it actually makes money, and that is in the film industry.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question and comment.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I'm ever so glad that the member for Beaches-East York found his way home again.

I want to speak in support of the fall budget bill.

Mr Yakabuski: I am surprised, Maria.

Mrs Van Bommel: Well, why would I not speak in favour of it, especially when you consider what has happened in the past and look at things such as the fact that in the years from 2000-01 to 2003-04, there was an increase in program spending of about 21%, and at the same time revenues dropped by 0.7%?

Anyone, even in their own household spending, understands that you cannot continue on that course of action.

You cannot continue to dig the hole deeper in terms of your finances. That was the trend that was occurring with the former government. So, through this bill, we are looking at ways to create savings. We have to do that, and that includes looking at things that are not working well. This bill talks to us about nine different tax credits that either have not worked well, are not being used any longer, or don't align themselves with our government priorities.

In doing that, we will save \$85 million over the next four years. That's \$85 million that we have to work at, first, reducing the deficit and, second, dealing with some of the program demands that we now have before us. That is one of the issues that I sometimes hear even in my own riding: The improvements that our government is trying to make, I'm being told, are not enough. I understand that, but we also have to work within the confines of our finances and, as anyone with a household understands, you cannot keep digging your financial hole deeper.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Ms Churley: I know that Liberal backbenchers have to stand up, speak in favour of and support government bills. I understand that, but I want to say clearly to them, and even those whom I like—and I do like some of the members, maybe all of them, who stood up and spoke.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Name names.

Ms Churley: No, I won't name names. But for a Liberal member to stand up and say that what this bill includes and involves are their priorities, when we're standing up and pointing out to the members today some of the problems with this bill, including the ending of a little but mighty program to help people buy vans for disabled family members—that's gone. We're standing up and pointing out that the government is not keeping a promise for the film industry that would keep jobs in this province, in this city, in this community. Daycare spaces and all of those things, we thought, from what the government said in election period time, were going to be their priorities.

Well, they are not any more. What seems to be a major priority in this bill is giving a tax credit that is mainly going to benefit the big banks and insurance companies.

Interjection: That's nonsense.

Ms Churley: That is not nonsense. Read the bill. That's why I'm so incensed about this. You talk about these being your priorities. I suggest to you that that will be pretty shocking to the people of Ontario when they figure out all of those things like delisting health services, not ending the clawback of the child tax credit, not giving the tax credit promised to the film industry to create jobs. But this bill is actually giving billions of dollars back to the banks and the insurance companies, and the government member says this bill is about their priorities.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Contrary to the last speaker, I am in favour of Bill 149. In fact, I'm very pleased to speak in favour of Bill 149. It's a bill that advances the plans our government outlined in the 2004 budget.

Bill 149, among other things, will address to some degree the unfairness of the property taxes charged to our seniors. It also provides more details on proposals that we made in the 2004 budget. For instance, the Ontario property tax credit for seniors will be improved for the first time since it was introduced in 1992, 12 years ago. The basic credit will be increased from the \$500 that now exists to \$625. This is a 25% increase. We estimate that 685,000 senior families will benefit, including 33,000 senior families who presently do not benefit. So there will be an additional 33,000 senior families receiving some of the tax credit. This is an \$85-million initiative.

We will also eliminate the capital tax by the year 2012. This tax has been indicated by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce as a disincentive to investment. We believe we must encourage economic growth, and by eliminating the capital tax we will improve the economy of Ontario. That's one of the tools that will improve our economy. As of January 2008, all small businesses and 13,000 medium-sized corporations will not pay any capital tax, and between 2008 and January 2012, the capital tax will be eliminated. So there will be no more capital tax as of January 2012.

Bill 149 addresses another very important issue that has been discussed for many years; that is, the apprenticeship training tax credit. Unions and businesses for many years have been concerned about the present and future shortage of skilled tradespeople. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has done a survey which concludes that 41% of the people who responded will experience a shortage of skilled people within five years. That is something we should be very much concerned with.

Our bill will encourage employers to hire and train apprentices in industrial, construction, automotive, power and certain service trades. We will pay up to \$5,000 of the apprenticeship salary each year for up to three years. Businesses will be eligible for 25% of the refundable tax credit for eligible expenses. If the business has a payroll of \$400,000 or less, the 25% will become 30%, so they will get a 30% tax credit. That is to show support for small corporations. We will be investing \$11.7 million more annually by 2006-07 to expand to 26,000 the number of young people registered in apprenticeships.

We are also creating the Ontario commercial investment funds program. This program will provide up to \$36 million in assistance, which will create a pool of \$120 million. Of course, this is seed capital for spinoff technology companies that will be formed by faculty, staff and students. This is a way to assist our grads in succeeding and making our economy stronger.

We must modernize our government. The Minister of Finance has spoken about that. We can do that by stimu-

lating new technology, which will keep our graduates in Ontario. We have done that to some degree in Bill 149. We should also eliminate extra red tape. One way of doing that is by having a single tax collection system—they totally disagree with that—that will assist in being more efficient and will help create a better standard of living.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you. These are my comments in support of Bill 149.

Interjection.

Mr Racco: I'm sorry, Mr Speaker. I thought I mentioned that I would share my time with my colleague from Etobicoke North.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry; I didn't hear you. But you just said it now, so that's fine.

Mr Qaadri: Before beginning, if I might, I'd like to echo the words and sentiments of the member for Beaches-East York when he himself was complimenting the eloquence of the member for Beaches-East York.

Ce plan repose sur les avantages concurrentiels de la province et vise à moderniser l'infrastructure, ainsi qu'à améliorer l'éducation et la formation de la main-d'œuvre, notamment de façon à utiliser du mieux possible les talents et les aptitudes que les immigrants apportent à l'Ontario.

It's a privilege to rise in support of Bill 149, the fall budget bill. Before discussing both the philosophy behind the bill and some particular aspects, I'd like to compliment, on behalf of the government caucus, the Minister of Finance on the stewardship he has so far displayed in what was a very difficult and challenging fiscal situation.

This bill encompasses fiscal prudence, a transformation for the betterment of Ontario, an introduction of transparency, as well as accountability. Why? Ultimately, to strengthen the foundations of the economic prosperity of Ontario, which is, after all, the foundation of a just and civil society.

As other members have pointed out, this bill encompasses a whole range of provisions, be it on an omnibus level or an ominous level, as some have said. I think in particular there are a number of positive aspects that touch so many different areas, including health care, education, training and infrastructure. Ultimately, it's about balancing that trade-off between prudent taxation, fiscal management and valued public services.

There are many specific commitments, whether we're looking at the tax credit for seniors, which will ultimately affect 685,000 senior families; the capital tax removal, which will help 13,000 medium-sized businesses; the \$120-million commitment for seed capital funding from the Ontario commercialization investment fund; the northern Ontario grow bonds; or the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority, which will ultimately leverage \$2 billion of infrastructure projects into the community.

I'd like very quickly to speak specifically about one thing that I think is a very important aspect and provision of Bill 149, the fall budget bill, and that is the granting of

the apprenticeship training tax credit. This is a four-year program. Ontario is at a crossroads. We have been told by various chambers of commerce, for example, that there is going to be a wave of retirement in the skilled trades over the next several years. We are told that almost 50% of individuals who engage in the skilled trades will be retiring imminently. This particular provision in the apprenticeship training program will help both unemployed and underemployed Canadians.

We find ourselves in a bizarre situation. There is work to be done in the skilled trades, there is a retiring workforce, there are certainly able-bodied men and women who want to engage in these trades, and yet there is a skills shortage. This is in many different industries: industrial, construction, machine power and service trades, just to name a few sectors.

What are some of the specific provisions? There is a \$12-million commitment. Whom will this help? How many individuals will this help? Something like 26,000 individuals will be able to avail themselves of these apprenticeship training programs. There will be, for example, grants to employers directly. Some of the salaries to the tune of approximately \$5,000 per year for three years will be picked up by the government.

As well, there's an initiative to have what's called a one-stop training and employment system. Essentially, it's about getting information out in a coherent manner, mentoring, and actually being the connecting body between employers and the to-be-employed. This will help apprentices, immigrants and, for example, youth in transition from school to work.

Ultimately it's about access, expanding training, employment services and a coherent dissemination of information, and to balance the budget, enhance public services and make our government programs more efficient. Why? Ultimately, to restore and guide Ontario to better fiscal prudence and financial health.

1710

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Yakabuski: It's my pleasure again to speak to the bill. We see so many previous tax credits that are being removed to hurt individuals in this budget bill, to hurt working families in Ontario—the home ownership plan, which was so helpful for young people to finally be able to purchase a home, being eliminated by this government. It just never seems to get it right. It takes away tax credits where they're very necessary, and on top of that increases taxes for people who can least afford to pay them: hard-working Ontario families.

The imposition of the health tax on Ontario families has been one of the most painful experiences they've been subjected to under this Liberal government, and I don't think they'll be forgetting about it. We'll be long done the debate on Bill 149 and they'll still be thinking about the broken promise to them on the health tax.

It seems to me they just haven't got it right. They just don't seem to have the balance about what is necessary with regard to budgetary measures in the province, and they haven't really understood the needs that are out there.

Some of the things that are a big concern to people are the broken promises on hydro, the broken promises on the health tax, the broken promises to working families, the broken promises to seniors. They're bragging about this tax credit to seniors, but it pales in comparison to what we were doing for seniors before they cancelled that tax credit and hurt seniors greatly in this province.

Mr Prue: I'm mindful of where I represent, my mis-spoken statement last time notwithstanding. Having said that, though, I'd like to comment on the members from Thornhill and Etobicoke North, because if I ever saw a dichotomy in what was being said in such a short span of some 11 minutes, it surely was these two members, who sit side by side but who are poles apart.

The member from Thornhill waxed eloquently about how important the reduction of the capital tax elimination was to the McGuinty government, how he is proud they are going to eliminate \$1 billion in revenue from that government in this period between today and 2012. The member from Etobicoke North spoke about how they were going to spend that money they no longer have on apprenticeship programs, and how important those programs are.

I do not understand how a government can eliminate such a vast amount of money, which will be only \$1 million this year, but will grow to \$40 million next year and \$100 million in the last full year of their mandate, and simply say that this is a fine thing, because we're going to have other programs and we're going to cut other things in order that we don't need that money.

Part of what they are cutting are programs that directly would help the disabled community, because companies no longer—even though they're perhaps going to get extra money back—are going to be able to apply for government programs to help the disabled to work in those workplaces, be they ramps or assistive devices for the disabled. They're no longer going to be able to apply to have child care programs in their companies, because the money is no longer available. They're no longer going to be able to have technological training. So it is all well and good to say you are eliminating the capital tax, but in eliminating that tax you are also eliminating the very programs that have made Canada and Ontario a model place in which to work. This is, in reality, a real disservice to our Ontario.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'm happy to speak about Bill 149, the Budget Measures Act. I want to speak in respect of a specific area, and that is the growing of the economy. Of course, we know that this bill addresses the balancing of the budget while supporting vital public services as well as encouraging economic growth. We also try to modernize government, and by cutting down and cleaning up the tax statutes, we are really doing small businesses a big favour.

Earlier this year, I went around the province. I've gone to the east, to the west and up north, meaning Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie, in an exercise of getting input from our small businesses. A number of the concerns they've expressed include regulatory burden. That is

why, by cleaning up our statutes, especially the tax statutes, we're making it easier for them to focus on their core businesses. Instead of spending their time filling out forms and complying with extremely complex procedures, they can actually work on marketing and providing better services.

I want to also speak on the apprenticeship training tax credit, because this is another area that small businesses have indicated to me where they are in great need of these apprenticeship programs, and our government is surely responding. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has unveiled an extremely intensive and aggressive program in that regard, and that is why, with this tax credit, I'm sure that a lot of the small businesses will be able to get the training-level employees that they've been desiring and in fact demanding for a long time. In respect of the economic development aspect, I think this will certainly be extremely supportive of our overall initiative.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the members from Etobicoke North and Thornhill on their comments.

I've said before in the House, and I will say again, that I think the apprenticeship tax credit is a very positive tax credit, and I support—I know I wanted our government to do it when we were in power, and I know we finally got it on our platform. I applaud the government for bringing it forth and I applaud the minister.

However, that being said, I'm so concerned about the Ontario home ownership savings plan being discontinued by the government. When that plan was in place for the years we were in power, the Conservatives were in power, we saw strong economic growth. A lot of people in this province—I don't have the exact numbers, but I believe it is something like a couple of hundred thousand families who took advantage of that program. That allowed them to get that little bit of extra help to build a new home or to provide the funding for a new home. This has been taken away by this government, and I can't for the life of me figure out why. When it's such a positive tax credit, why remove it? Because the \$2,000 or \$2,500, whatever it is that has an impact on a new home, is a pittance when compared to the overall cost of the home and the economic spinoff to the communities where these new homes are being built. Whether those new homes are in Thunder Bay or Timmins or Toronto or Niagara or wherever, it's still a benefit to that community. I'm most disappointed in that particular aspect of Bill 149, that it removes that.

Anyhow, I appreciate this opportunity to say a few words this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: In response, I recognize the member for Thornhill.

Mr Racco: Let me thank the members from Etobicoke North, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Beaches-East York, Markham and Simcoe North.

I want to make clear to the member from Beaches-East York that the programs that have been eliminated have been eliminated because they were not being used. We are trying to modernize our system, and that is one way of doing it.

Also, the member from Markham—it is very clear when he says that the people want us to eliminate red tape as much as possible, that that is one way of stimulating more economic activity in our province, which means more prosperity for all of us.

1720

Of course, from the comments made by the member from Etobicoke North when he spoke about the apprenticeship program, it's quite clear to anyone that in Canada and Ontario we need to stimulate interest for young people to get into apprenticeship programs. Unfortunately, we have not done a good job in the past, and unless we do so, very shortly we are going to have a shortage of this type of employee, as we have now.

In many parts of Europe—for instance, where I grew up—it was quite normal that we do that within the education system, so there were people for every industry that operated within a certain area.

We have moved in that direction, because we believe it to be the right thing to do, and I believe that in the near future our economy will continue to grow, as it is presently, and better. Of course, our system will be more modernized and we will have a better economic future, a better Ontario and a more prosperous Ontario for all of us. When that happens, we can afford even more social services and more programs for our elderly and for younger members of our community.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wilson: I'm pleased to rise and speak on this budget bill for a few minutes this afternoon.

This budget bill does nothing to help some 500 people who have been recently laid off in the town of Collingwood from Nacan starch products, Backyard Products Ltd, Blue Mountain Pottery and a couple of other companies. There is nothing in this bill that gives any assistance. There is nothing in this bill that gives an olive branch or lends a hand or any training or retraining for some 500 people who are going to have a very difficult time buying gifts for their kids and their loved ones this Christmas.

It's very, very sad, because it's typical of when Liberals get into office that it seems we lose jobs. It's exactly what happened when David Peterson went in.

Let me read you startling statistics that did not occur under Mike Harris or Ernie Eves. We created a million net new jobs. That means that, with all the job losses and job gains, by the end of our time in government we created over a million new jobs in the province.

Contrast that to when Bob Rae was in between 1990 and 1995. After five years in office, the NDP left us with a negative 10,000 jobs, and it looks like the Liberals are on the same path. Job growth has declined by 32.5% since the Liberals came to office some 14 months ago. The number of single employable people on welfare has increased over the last year.

We saw that when David Peterson was in and Bob Nixon was the Treasurer. They felt that if they increased welfare rates to be similar to the minimum wage, that would somehow encourage people to move from welfare

into the workplace. They called it the steps to employment program.

Nothing could be further from the truth. If you increase welfare rates—and by the way, we did have the highest average welfare rates in the country under Mike Harris. We always made sure our rates were 30% above the national average in all categories and higher for disabled people than in most other provinces and higher than the average for Canada. They are going to raise welfare rates again, and probably continue to raise them over their four years in office. You'll see more people stay at home and do nothing. We're already seeing that in statistics of the last 14 months since the Liberals have been in office.

Housing starts are down by 2.7% this year for the first time in many years, and they're estimated to decline by another 12% by the year 2005.

The average deficit this government will run—we balanced the books after inheriting an \$11.6-billion deficit—\$1 million an hour was being spent every hour, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year when the NDP was in office. They were spending \$1 million more an hour than they were taking in. That was their deficit: \$11.6 billion. We're going to see this Liberal government have a deficit, on average, of about \$2.5 billion each year over the next four years, and the debt will climb by more than \$10 billion between last year, 2003, and 2008. This is by their own budget documents.

This particular piece of legislation cancels \$85 million in valuable tax credits. Many of those tax credits were directed to assist the most vulnerable people in our province.

The government will cancel, in this bill, the following tax credits: the provincial sales tax rebate on vehicles purchased by those with disabilities—they'll save \$8 million by this act. That's horrible. I can't believe Liberal members are going to vote for a bill that will take \$8 million away from persons with disabilities who need a modified vehicle to get around. It's just absolutely contrary to their own rhetoric with respect to the disabilities act that they've introduced and that I intend to support in this House. One step forward, two steps back, and \$8 million less for people with disabilities.

The Ontario home ownership savings plan will be cancelled by this legislation we're debating this afternoon. When Bob Nixon brought that in years ago, I was a young assistant around here and I was able to buy my first house by using the Ontario home ownership savings plan. It was a good vehicle. It needed to be advertised more so the take-up would be greater, because the government is saying that one of the reasons they're getting rid of it is that the take-up by people wasn't particularly large. Well, if more people knew about it and if more local accountants would explain it to people, I think the take-up would be larger.

Home ownership has to be the goal of any government—not subsidized housing, not co-op housing, not all that other subsidized stuff that, frankly, is ridiculous in many cases; at least, when the Liberals and NDP do it,

it's ridiculous. Home ownership should be the goal and we should be helping, as legislators, to make sure people have some money in their pockets, and are able to afford a house and move out of the apartment they've been renting for years, paying landlords, perhaps in many cases, exorbitant rents.

The workplace accessibility tax incentive—the government will save \$7 million by cancelling that; the workplace child care tax incentive—the government's going to save \$10 billion by cancelling that; the graduate transitions tax credit; the education technology tax credit; the employer tax exemption on stock options; benefits for our research and development employees; and the Ontario research employees stock option tax credit.

As a former Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, I went out to those high-tech sectors in Waterloo and Ottawa, and in London, Ontario, the health sciences centre. I built MaRS; it's being built now. I put the money forward for MaRS, the medical and related research sciences building that's being built down the street, actually just out the front door of this building, on University Avenue and College Street.

The fact of the matter is that these tax credits I've just mentioned were put in place on purpose to make sure we attracted those high-tech employees. We had a brain drain in this province, and these tax credits went a long way in making sure we got these young people back in, including giving them a tax credit on stock options they might receive from their employers as an enticement to work in the Nortels, the IBMs and the RIMs of the world. But no, the government doesn't seem to care about these young, brilliant minds. We're going to see brain drain again because they're taking away the little bit the Ontario government could do in this area, and that was to give them a tax break on some of the benefits they received to entice them to work in the high-tech industries in the first place.

The 10-year property tax exemption for new electricity generating facilities is being dropped. Why? I don't know. In fact, under the government's electricity act, they're now going to tax new alternative sources of electricity, like new hydroelectric projects. It's totally contrary to anything that Dwight Duncan, the energy minister, has said in this House. His finance minister, Greg Sorbara, is really pulling the rug from under him in terms of moving forward on alternative or renewable electricity supply in this province. These particular tax credits on renewable and alternative energy supply are being repealed retroactive to November 25, 2002. That's kind of strange.

Interjection.

Mr Wilson: Oh, yeah, the government—someone's heckling. They're going to replace it with some new tax credits of some sort, but the net result is that they save \$85 million, so don't tell me you're doing the industry any favours. You're actually robbing them and creating a disincentive to new energy.

In fact, what you are doing in energy is repeating the mistakes of the NDP government. They're starting new NUG contracts, which Dwight Duncan and Dalton

McGuinty, the Premier, used to rail against when we were in government. We used to rail against them when we were in government because the NDP brought them in. These were very expensive electricity purchasing contracts called non-utility generating contracts, NUG contracts. It cost us tens of millions of dollars that we shouldn't have had to spend. A lot of that was put on to the Hydro debt in the province. Now I see that Dwight Duncan is proposing, with these RFPs he's got out—requests for proposals—to give these same guys that ripped off the province when the NDP were in up to 11 cents per kilowatt hour. Your average hydro bill at home right now, in the average household in Ontario, is about \$200 a month, at 4.7 cents per kilowatt hour. At 11 cents, your average bill, by the time Dalton McGuinty is done with you in the next few months, will more than double to over \$425 a month. But they put this in this bill as some sort of positive incentive to the system.

1730

The seniors' tax credit: I think this is the most abhorrent part of this budget bill. This bill introduces a credit for an additional \$125, on average, to 685,000 seniors. It's the Ontario seniors' property tax credit that we're all familiar with on the back page of our income tax forms. But they forget to mention that in their last budget bill the Liberal government cancelled the Ernie Eves seniors' education property tax credit, which would have put an extra \$475, on average—actually about \$600, on average, in my riding, with the incomes we have. Some 945,000 senior households would have benefited. So they cancelled our tax credit, which was far more generous, and replaced it with a pittance, and in their press release announcing this budget bill tried to tell the seniors of Ontario they're somehow better off. They're not better off. They would have been better off, on average, by \$350 if they had stuck with the Conservatives and not switched to the Liberals.

We did that because not every senior household has a huge income stream, and during the eight years we were in office, many of our seniors didn't benefit from the 30%, on average, tax cut that we made. So whether you call it the seniors' education property tax rebate or whether you call it the seniors' property tax credit, we were enhancing that, as I said, on average by \$475 a year, or \$600 a year per senior household in a riding like Simcoe-Grey. We were enhancing that to make sure every senior, regardless of income, actually saw a decrease in their overall tax situation. We picked the vehicle of education property tax to do that. That's regrettable. Our seniors are aging. We have this demographic bubble that's going through, of a growing and aging population. They need more help, not less help.

I just want to read a letter from Dave Allamby, of Beeton, Ontario, from my riding. He says:

"The McGuinty government has already got in place some very harsh policies that target seniors and middle-class residents of this province that is going to cost us not only in our pocketbooks but will impact our health big-time.

"Health Minister George Smitherman has entered into a secret deal with the doctors that amounts to blackmail. Doctors are being urged to stop or reduce giving certain medications to older patients on the premise that they are being overmedicated.

"The purpose for this exercise is to save the Ontario drug plan approximately \$200 million on the backs of the most vulnerable of our society.

"However, this misguided policy of Smitherman goes beyond blackmail. It is highly discriminatory as it singles out a specific section of society. There is," according to Mr Allamby's comment, "no indication or basis in fact to support that the elderly are being overmedicated. I suspect if, in fact, there is any overmedicating going on it involves young and old alike." He's got a good point there.

"Then we have the Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, who clearly says it's the government's mandate to curb the costs of the Ontario drug benefit program. He bases his conclusions for doing this because it's costing the government \$2.3 billion a year for the drug plan, which is growing at 15% a year."

Mr Allamby goes on to say, "Well, does Sorbara not realize that our aging population is also growing, necessitating the rising costs? But the question begs to be asked, why is anyone young or old being overmedicated, as Smitherman/Sorbara claim? Are patients writing their own prescriptions?" Mr Allamby asks.

"This accusation of overmedicating is a direct insult to our doctors and their competency as it is them who dictate what drugs the young and old require. But this is one more example of this government's deceit in wanting to target the old and the middle class, to deny them drugs they are entitled to and to continue raising taxes."

That's Mr T.D. Allamby of Alliston, who sent the letter to the Beeton Record-Sentinel, the Beeton-Tottenham paper in my riding.

I think that speaks volumes. A lot of seniors are still under the impression that Mr Smitherman has changed the OMA deal. He's going to have to explain that, because a lot of seniors are still under the impression that the doctors are being asked to save some \$200 million in prescriptions and I'm not sure, given that they haven't released nor have they explained fully—I think they were going to this morning, but they haven't really explained to anybody in this House that I'm aware of—what the new doctors' deal is. It's certainly not a deal, it's certainly not an agreement, because we know the doctors are having it shoved down their throats by the dictators called Smitherman and McGuinty here. But at the end of the day, seniors aren't very happy, nor should they be.

Something that should be in this act—and I'm looking for it—is a commitment that was made to me by Peter Wilkinson, the executive assistant or chief of staff to Greg Sorbara, who clearly said to me many weeks ago that by mid-October they would have a new regulation or a piece of legislation in place. If legislation is required, this budget bill would be a perfect vehicle for it, because condominium owners and Intrawest, the new condomin-

ium development in the town of Blue Mountain, were inadvertently put in a commercial class for taxation purposes, which means condominium owners in Blue Mountain are paying basically hotel commercial-based taxes for condominiums. It's unfair. Their taxes in many cases go from \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year to \$12,000 or \$14,000 a year. It's ridiculous, it's out of line with the rest of the province, and a commitment has been made through the chief of staff of the Minister of Finance and other bureaucratic staff, to me and to officials at Intrawest Corp, that this matter would be dealt with. Well, it's not in this legislation.

I urged the government to move forward with the reclassification of rental condos at Blue Mountain Resorts. People are e-mailing me and they want to know what in the world the government is doing to correct this error that was made in the past. In fact, I have a letter dated September 27, 2004, from George Weider, who is chairman of Blue Mountain Resorts. He says,

"Dear Jim:

"Thank you for sending me the copy of your letter to Bob Comish on the tax issue. This has been a very destructive taxation change. It's been unfair and senseless to condominium owners to be taxed in a commercial category along with use of a residential assessment method. It's a potential blow to the local and Ontario economies, as individual condominium owners are needed to finance hotel rooms in this resort area. Visits to Blue Mountain are seasonal, and occupancy rates are too low to support most standard type hotels owned by one owner. The demise of Blue Mountain Pottery and Nacan—I mentioned that earlier, and I mentioned Nacan earlier—"should be a reminder that the vacation and resort industries are vitally needed, as our mainline industries are threatened by competition from off shore.

"I understand that some attention is being paid to the hundreds of letters and protests, but that no definite actions have been taken yet to change this unfortunate system. Thank you very much for your support on this issue and for your efforts on behalf of Blue Mountain, Intrawest, the Village Association and the owners."

That's George Weider, chairman.

Again, I urge the government to correct this injustice. You would be a hero among the condominium owners in the Blue Mountain area. It's good politics, it's the right thing to do and I hope you'll do it.

Finally, in the few minutes I have left, I just wanted to talk to the constituents back home in Alliston, the town of New Tecumseth, Green Briar and Briar Hill, where all members know we need traffic lights outside the Nottawasaga Inn, on the Tenth Side Road. I see Mike Brown and others nodding, to their credit. This is something nice I'm saying about the Liberal government.

I sent Minister Takhar a letter asking him to come to lunch at the Nottawasaga Inn. Then, after lunch, I would take him outside, as Honda is getting out, from about 2:15 to about 4:15, as 2,000 cars go one way and 2,000 cars go the other way, and show him the highway; stand at the side of the road and watch the cars go by. I think he

would see the need. Green Briar and Briar Hill are mainly an adult community. Many people there are seniors, but even if they weren't seniors, I don't care how well you drive or how well you can't drive, the fact of the matter is, you can't get out on this highway, young and old alike. It's a dangerous spot. Two people were killed just last year, about a kilometre west of where we need the lights. That court case actually is going through right now. It's a dangerous piece of road, and we need help.

I want to thank Minister Takhar, the Minister of Transportation. He got the letter and immediately instructed his staff to set up the lunch. So he's not afraid to come into my riding; he's not afraid to deal with this issue. We had announced in June 2003 that we would put the lights up. The engineers from the Ministry of Transportation came with their big bulletin boards and maps and their good science to tell us where we should put the lights and how they should be timed to coordinate with other lights that are many kilometres down the road. I just want to thank Mr Takhar for that. I look forward, along with the residents of Green Briar, the council of New Tecumseth and the owner of the Nottawasaga Inn, Mr Lou Biffis, to getting together and finally resolving this issue.

Finally, I just want to say it's a great personal regret and a regret of many Canadians that Dr Frederick Grant Banting did not win the Greatest Canadian contest last night. He came pretty close. I think he is the greatest Canadian. I congratulate the fans of Tommy Douglas, of whom I am one, for him being chosen as the greatest Canadian, but, again, I remind the Minister of Culture that you have an obligation to preserve the Banting homestead. This is the childhood home of Sir Frederick Banting, the first Nobel Prize recipient in medicine that Canada had, and we need to do everything we can.

1740

Finally—back to the bill—I just want to say that I think this is regressive legislation. It takes \$85 million away from the Ontarians who need it most: our seniors and our disabled.

The NDP went on about capital tax, but I think perhaps if they understood capital tax a little more—capital tax hurts our small businesses. It's a tax on outlays that have already been incurred by a business of whatever size in buying new machinery, in training employees, in capital goods and services that help enhance the business and increase employment in the province.

To cancel that tax is a good thing. You just need to do it in the time frame that we had set out. This bill drags it out another four years. We had set out the cancellation of the capital tax to help create jobs and stimulate small- and medium-sized businesses in this province. We had put in place in our budget bills to cancel that tax four years earlier than the government is planning on doing, because we wanted to coincide with what Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien were doing, which was cancelling capital tax on these businesses to create jobs. For once, I have to say these guys should get in sync with their

federal Liberal cousins and eliminate that tax as per the original schedule.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Prue: I'm privileged to comment on the statements made by the member from Simcoe-Grey. He gave quite a rambling speech and he touched on many factors. Although I can agree with him, and I do agree with him, that many of the tax credits that are being done away with are ill-advised, everything from modifying vehicles for the disabled, the child care provisions for those industries and businesses that want child care on site, technological development and the provisions for the disabled to allow them to work—all of these are being chopped—I do have to say that I disagree with him on many other things that he said.

He talked about the welfare rates, as if somehow a 3% increase in a very low welfare rate is going to do disaster to this province. The 3%, in fact, does disaster to the people who are forced to live on welfare, sometimes through no fault of their own. Remember that nearly 40% of the people in Ontario who are on welfare are children. These are children who are destined for a life of poverty, children who are growing up poor, children who are doing without, children who are teased in school, children who really deserve a lot more than to be told that a 3% increase is somehow bad for the economy and bad for the people of Ontario. What was bad, really, was the 22% reduction that preceded all of this and the eight years when those people were forced to live in increasingly spiralling down destitution.

I also disagree quite clearly with what he had to say about rip-offs of NUGs in the past. If there ever were some rip-offs, I think I saw them in the last government. Everything he talked about NUGS pales in comparison with Clitheroe, OPG and Accenture. If you want to know rip-offs, those were the real ones.

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I'm pleased to rise today and add my comments to Bill 149 as well. I would like to make some comments in the context of a northerner on some of the items that are contained in this piece of legislation for northerners, and northwestern Ontario specifically.

First, I did hear a comment from one of the members opposite—I'm not sure which one it was—referring to the welfare rolls and the increase in the size of the welfare rolls. It is certainly our understanding that for every quarter that we've been in government, those numbers have gone down. I'm sure our minister would love to have an opportunity to speak to that, but I'm sure that will be addressed at another time.

My context, in terms of my comments about Bill 149—as many people know, southern Ontario has seen a large growth in its economy in the last five or 10 years. As many people are now aware, northern Ontario for the most part missed that expansion.

What I'm happy to see in this piece of legislation is some accommodation, some recognition, about the challenges that northerners and, in my context, northwestern Ontario are facing. Specifically, there are three or four

initiatives that we believe are going to move us forward in terms of being able to build and expand our economy, and also retain some of those industries that are still there and are challenged today. Some examples: the Go North initiative, which is a joint initiative between two ministries—the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines; the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp, which we are anticipating will see its mandate refocused back toward more private sector job creation—that was its original mandate under the program when it was first introduced in the late 1980s by the Peterson government; and the one that I'm most excited about, which is the grow bonds program. I'm proud of this one because this idea grew out of northwestern Ontario. The Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce came up with the idea. It was adopted in our government's platform and is now contained in this legislation. We're excited about the potential for this to impact on northern Ontario in the near future.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'd like to commend my long-time colleague from Simcoe-Grey for his outstanding presentation and the commitment he brings to the Legislature and the debate with respect to the government's second budget bill in its short, 13-month history in this province. Clearly this second budget, although it isn't as remarkable as the first budget, which broke all records for tax increases for Ontarians, still contains within it a significant number of losses for seniors, in particular for disabled persons, and for others.

On the issue of seniors—and I know my colleague speaks from the heart when he talks about advocating for seniors and frail elderly. Both his parents, whom I know very, very well, just do not have the mobility, as age has taken its serious toll on their lifetime contributions. He brings that perspective not only to the House but he brought it when he was Minister of Health, expressing continued commitment and concern for the quality of life for seniors.

It's somewhat passing strange that a government member is bringing forward a resolution later this week about a seniors' bill of rights, yet we're here today debating a bill that removes some of the benefits that seniors have appreciated in our province. So I want to commend my colleague for his commitment. I know he is concerned that hydro rates, a broken promise of this government, are going to most seriously affect persons on low incomes, and seniors in particular—a broken Liberal promise that will cost double-digit increases for them. He's concerned about the government repealing, in its first budget bill, the seniors' education tax credit, which literally takes \$500 out of the average senior's pocket. So I commend my colleague from Simcoe-Grey.

Mr Lalonde: I was listening to the people a little while ago concerning the tax credit that people used to get to purchase a vehicle. If the members had looked very clearly, in the past, the government used to have a budget of \$8 million for those tax credits. Now we have added another \$2 million, which makes the program \$10 mil-

lion. So it's not \$8 million, we're not saving \$8 million; we have added \$2 million, which makes the program available at \$10 million.

Besides this, in the past, all you were able to get was a tax credit on the purchase of a car. Let's say you paid \$30,000 for a car; your tax deduction or tax credit was \$2,400. Now, with this new program, you're entitled to get up to \$15,000 per project, either to modify your vehicle for the disabled or to modify your home to accommodate the disabled.

In the past, too many people were getting that tax credit, which was not useful for people who deserved it or needed it. But now we are making sure that everyone will benefit from this \$10-million program. Again, everybody who was entitled to that tax credit before will be entitled up to \$15 million every time they apply for this program.

1750

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe-Grey has two minutes to reply.

Mr Wilson: Thank you to colleagues from all sides of the House for your responses, and a personal thank you to Mr Jackson, the member from Burlington, for mentioning my parents.

I just want to compliment Cam in terms of his work. Every Sunday morning—it was Saturdays at one time, and now it's Sundays—at 740 AM on your radio dial, Mr Jackson does a phone-in show. He covers seniors' issues, health care and all the issues we've talked about this afternoon. He does a valuable service. I'm not sure too many of us are on local radio faithfully every Sunday morning communicating with the people of Ontario. He does a great job on that. I thank him for his kind comments.

I want to thank my parents. I know my mother is watching now. I don't think I've done that often enough on the public airwaves in the 14 years I've been here. I also want to thank my great-aunt Margaret Wilson and my great-aunt Sister Pauline Wilson, who watch question period every day. God bless them; it's got to be a little tricky for them once in a while, especially when I lose my temper from time to time. But I will remind the several thousand viewers at home that that's theatre arts.

Interjection.

Mr Wilson: People like Mrs Papatello, whatever she's the minister of—social services these days—have a tendency to get under your skin. She's the only one to have ever called me a liar in public—on a Windsor radio station—in my entire 14 years. As my mother said at the time, "She has no couth." But in Christianity and culture I learned, in my degree at university, that we have to forgive people like Sandra, no matter how difficult it is. So I forgive you, Sandra.

Interjection.

Mr Wilson: If you'd shut up for two minutes, I could actually compliment you. I could think of something on which to compliment you, but given that I have five seconds left, nothing comes to mind.

I want to thank everyone who spoke in support of my comments this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I'd like to make a few points in the little time we have left till the end of the evening on Bill 149 and really in regard to what we've done. We've done so much, so many great things over this last year on so many fronts. With what we've been doing on health care, education, the environment, our economy, we've put Ontario on the right course, on a strong footing for a very prosperous future for all—opportunity for all.

One of the things I'd like to talk about is the apprenticeship training tax credit, an important measure we're bringing forth. I had the chance to be at the health and safety stewards' dinner at local 183 a few days ago and got a chance to speak to many of the skilled tradespeople who were at that dinner. They had heard about our apprentice training program and were just raving about it. It's something that has been so needed.

We know that the 2003 Ontario Chamber of Commerce skilled trades survey has come out and said that within the next 15 years, 52% of skilled tradespeople are expected to retire. That's going to be an enormous shortage that has to be dealt with, and this apprentice training tax credit will be able to do that.

As well, 41% of respondents anticipated that they would be faced with a skills shortage in their industry within five years. We're taking proactive measures to make sure that does not happen and that we have those skilled tradespeople in place years down the road.

The purpose of the apprenticeship training tax credit is to encourage employers to hire and train apprentices in industrial, construction and motive power and certain service trades.

Many of these tradespeople were sitting at that dinner that night, many of them well above the age of 50 and looking to retire in the next few years. I could tell you that as we were going through school, many of us were looking at different passions in life and wanted to participate in different professions. Some of us wanted to go on to higher education, as far as colleges and universities, but others did not. They wanted to take different paths. We want to make sure there is opportunity for all those who want to go into those different paths. If you want to be a drywaller or a bricklayer or if you want to work in carpentry, all those are very skilled jobs and, actually, they're very high-paying jobs.

We want to make sure that those jobs are also safe. Thanks to our Minister of Labour here, who has brought through legislation to make sure there is a great deal of emphasis—actually, he set out as his number one priority health and safety in the workplace. It is making a huge difference. There are a lot of savings, actually, to be made in the workplace. There are over 300,000 workplace injuries every year at a cost of \$12 billion to the province of Ontario. So I have to commend the Minister of Labour for the work he's doing on that front and on the savings, not just in terms of the monetary value, but

in making sure that our men and women come home safe every day from the workplace.

So we're looking at good jobs and a better future for our young people. Corporations and other unincorporated businesses would be eligible, with this apprenticeship tax credit, for a 25% refundable tax credit on eligible expenditures incurred with respect to eligible apprentices in the construction, industrial and motive power and certain service trades, as mentioned before. For businesses with a total payroll cost not exceeding \$400,000, the tax credit rate would be increased to 30%.

We're also investing in our workforce by transforming Ontario's apprentice training system. It's also an investment of \$11.7 million of additional monies by 2006-07 to expand the number of young people registered in apprenticeships to 26,000.

I know the member from Thunder Bay just spoke glowingly about the northern Ontario grow bonds. In those northern Ontario grow bonds, we're committed to promoting prosperity in northern communities that have been neglected for many years; that's so important. We're making sure they will prosper in the future. We believe there is an untapped potential in northern Ontario and we need to help showcase that potential to the rest of the world. As part of our northern prosperity plan, it's going to help northern communities attract and retain investment and jobs. We propose, in this bill, the establishment of a corporation to make loans to businesses in northern Ontario. The northern Ontario grow bonds program would help new and expanding businesses in northern communities and improve opportunities for entrepreneurs in the north.

ROYAL ASSENT**SANCTION ROYALE**

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, his Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 18, An Act respecting the Provincial Auditor /
Projet de loi 18, Loi concernant le vérificateur provincial.

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Planning Act /
Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services /
Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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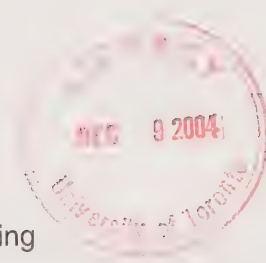
Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 December 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent, it being December 1 and World AIDS Day, that members have permission to wear the red ribbon in recognition of World AIDS Day today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent for the wearing of the ribbon? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ALLIANCE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to draw attention to the fact that the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance has been at Queen's Park for the past three days, meeting with MPPs from all three parties and sharing with them the recommendations they are making to the Rae review of post-secondary education.

On Monday, John Tory and I met with several of those representatives and heard first-hand about the issues they want Bob Rae to consider when he makes his recommendations to the government. Several of them are in the gallery today; I would like to welcome Alison Forbes and Adam Spence.

Students bring a valuable perspective to the table, and theirs is a voice that needs to be heard, especially now, when significant changes are being contemplated. These student representatives came here to deliver the message that well-funded, accessible higher education builds a bright future for all Ontarians.

Right now, Ontario ranks 10th in terms of per student funding in Canada. Average tuition in Ontario has increased by 139% since 1993, and the Ontario student assistance program provides too little assistance to too few students and is overly bureaucratic.

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, along with many of the other groups that have been attending the public meetings and making submissions to the Rae review, believe there must be a substantial financial investment in post-secondary education. Students, both now and in the future, will be the most directly affected

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 2004

by the changes that will be made, and they deserve to have their voices heard.

I would like to thank them once again for coming to Queen's Park and meeting with MPPs.

McKELLAR PARK

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Rarely is attention called to our local residents who volunteer their time, their hard work and their inspiration to improve our communities.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, such a movement has been firmly rooted by the McKellar Park community build project. Two years ago, parents who live in the west-end Ottawa neighbourhood near McKellar Park faced a deteriorating play structure for their children. Community residents rallied together to devise a plan of action to provide their children with a safe and enjoyable play facility. Together with city of Ottawa staff, local residents undertook a fundraising initiative. Initially, local residents intended to raise enough money to build one new toddler play structure. They have shown us, though, that their dreams have no limit. Today, children greet two new play facilities at McKellar Park, with a price tag of \$95,000. The city honoured this particular group as having raised the most money for a local grass-roots community group. On October 24 of this year, they celebrated their efforts with an official recognition and ribbon-cutting ceremony.

To all the local residents and volunteers, I thank you for reminding us of what a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can do in their community. In particular, I would like to thank and to recognize the following individuals for their vision of the project and success in fundraising: Clare Grosskleg, Laurie Pytura, Patti Church, John Rapp, Karen Blakely, Sandra Wong, Lee-Ellen Carroll, Janice Palmer and Wendy Henry—all women. I salute and applaud these community leaders who were responsible for heralding the grand opening of the new McKellar Park for their children.

ELK AND DEER FARMING

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): On November 1, the Ontario Deer and Elk Farmers' Association held a reception at Queen's Park to draw attention to the problems in their industry and to ask the government for help. These farmers have a specific issue with the Environmental Bill of Rights regulation that considers deer and elk to be wildlife, regardless of the fact that they

are bred for genetic excellence, born in captivity and raised like any other livestock. Because of this wildlife designation and the EBR regulation, farmers will be subjected to restrictions that will take away the only source of income they have right now.

Just as with beef, deer and elk farmers have been unable to move their animals across the border and have found it very difficult to compete with cheap foreign venison. Many have only managed to keep their business by breeding trophy bulls for harvest preserves. With the new regulation, this will no longer be an option. The deer and elk association has asked Minister Peters to move responsibility for farm-raised deer and elk from the Ministry of Natural Resources to that of agriculture and food. Farmers want this government to see that the animals born and raised on farms and ranches should be treated like other farmed animals, not wildlife. They feel that if the government insists on expropriating their industry, it should at least do an economic impact study to consider the negative financial consequences and to consider compensation.

At the reception, Minister Peters indicated to the association that his ministry would potentially play a role in dealing with their issues. That sounds to me like a promise. While this government breaks promises, I ask that Minister Peters keep his personal word. I ask that he take the appropriate steps to assume responsibility for the cervid industry and help these farmers, as he said he would.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to tell you about something significant that happened today. There were a couple of hundred people outside demonstrating on behalf of the film industry and demonstrating against this government that isn't delivering on its promise. We had actors out there, producers, a lot of crew members and many, many who depend on the film industry, coming to plead with you and urge you to keep your promise.

They all understood before the election that you were going to help them. They believed you then. Surely you must have meant to keep your promise, and that promise was that you would increase tax credits from 20% to 35%, and further support for feature films from 20% to 40%. Sorbara, McGuinty—everyone understood that promise.

After the government got elected and we posed a question in this House, the Minister of Finance said we can't involve ourselves in horse-trading; we can't do what other jurisdictions are doing. A lot of provinces, and the US, are giving a whole lot of tax credits to keep their industry there, and my friend Greg Sorbara said, "We can't do it."

Mercifully, I think they're changing their position, but the film industry is saying, "We need your support today—not three years from now before an election, but today."

Deliver on that promise. That's what they expect.

1340

ONTARIO PRINCIPALS' DAY

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise today to recognize Ontario Principals' Day. The strength, dedication and enthusiasm of Ontario's 5,000 elementary and secondary principals and vice-principals have been a vital part of the success of Ontario schools.

Often, the work of our principals is overlooked or taken for granted. However, a principal can turn a struggling school into a thriving one. As well, every day, principals across this province make a significant difference in the lives of our children. They are not only the disciplinarians whom we were afraid of as students; they are also counsellors, administrators, mentors, education advocates and community builders. Principals are some of the most important leaders in our communities, and constantly demonstrate this leadership to our students and teachers.

Every day, principals face unique issues and challenges. Improving student achievement, balancing the budget, completing administrative duties and spending time with students, staff and parents all fall within their responsibilities. In a sense, principals are the administrators of our future. I would like to thank Ontario's principals for rising to the challenge and working to help students and teachers in our schools succeed.

I'd also like to congratulate the Ontario Principals' Council on winning two awards of distinction from the Canadian Association of Communicators in Education for the second year in a row.

Principals are the front-line administrators who are charged with the duty of restoring confidence in our school system, and they deserve our praise. I would like to congratulate Ontario's principals on the great job that they do every day. We salute you.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today, over 1,000 creative and talented men and women of Ontario's film and related industries rallied at Queen's Park to protest the McGuinty government's abandonment of Ontario's world-respected film industry. This rally comes on the heels of a press conference held this week by the Ontario PC Party leader, John Tory.

Dalton McGuinty ran on a platform that promised to boost the Ontario film and television tax credit from 20% to 33%, to introduce a new feature film component of the Ontario film and television tax credit and to increase this credit from 20% to 40% of eligible expenditures.

Now this government has broken two more promises. Rather, we have the finance minister standing up in the House and saying, "Ontario will not participate in the unhealthy bidding war with upping and upping tax credits."

I would say to this government, the men and women of Ontario's film industry are the best in the world at what they do. They have brought this city and this province jobs, investment and a sense of pride in our country. I urge the government to keep their commitment to the film industry. Do not break another promise; the jobs and livelihood of thousands of people depend on it. Do not abandon Hollywood North.

ST JUDE CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I rise today to congratulate the Lakehead Catholic school board trustees, principal Margaret Hall, and the students and faculty at St Jude Catholic Elementary School in Thunder Bay. A few weeks ago, when the EQAO results were announced, St Jude students had an astounding improvement over previous years' results.

In reading, the number of St Jude grade 3 students at or above the provincial level was 82% this year, compared to last year's level, which was 32%, and the 2002 level at 46%. Students also dramatically improved in the math category: 76% of grade 6 students met or surpassed the provincial level, in contrast to 19% in 2003. The third category, writing, also saw tremendous results for both grade 3 and grade 6: 79% of the grade 3 students were above the provincial level, and 63% of the grade 6 students.

If we look at the percentage of all grade 3 students at or above the provincial standard in 2003-04 in the last three categories, we can see how exceptionally the St Jude students performed. The provincial averages in reading were 54%; in writing, 58%; and in math, 57%. The same can be said for grade 6. The provincial average was 58% for reading, 54% for writing and 57% for math.

The incredible turnaround for St Jude led them to be one of three schools that were profiled in the EQAO case study. The case study noted that improvements in scores demonstrate the importance of systematic leadership, the value of using assessment data and the results a school can achieve when the commitment is shared among school leaders, staff and parents.

I add my congratulations to all those responsible for this incredible turnaround, including our own Ministry of Education.

SPEED RIVER FAMILY HEALTH NETWORK

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I was pleased yesterday to have the Minister of Health visit the Speed River Family Health Network in Guelph. Speed River employs 20 doctors and serves 30,000 patients. They provide the sort of multidisciplinary, 24/7 team approach that we want.

Dr Blair Fraser reported that most of the doctors who work at Speed River supported the OMA deal. "It's an excellent agreement," Fraser said. In fact, Wellington county doctors voted 51% in favour of the deal.

Here is what the Guelph Mercury had to say on this issue yesterday: "There is much to recommend the provincial proposal unveiled last Friday. It will make Ontario family physicians the best paid in Canada, up from fourth spot, and specialists the second-highest paid, up from fifth place."

The Mercury went on to say: "People are fed up with problems in health care.... They want the problems resolved after years of bickering.... This newly tuned deal addresses many of the complaints doctors voiced in rejecting the original text."

I agree with the Mercury editorial, and I applaud the Premier and the Minister of Health for their courage in moving forward and transforming our health care system to give the people of Ontario the health care they want and deserve.

PROJECT GENESIS

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to rise in this Legislature and share with my colleagues that Suncor is investing a total of \$1 billion in Sarnia-Lambton.

Project Genesis is part of a new plan to build a new diesel desulphurization unit and also to modify other equipment to process more crude oil. This plant will reduce the sulphur content in diesel fuel, along with a hydrogen project.

As we move forward into the 21st century, cleaner fuels are one way in which we will achieve a more sustainable development approach in our fuel consumption and, in turn, this will help to keep our environment clean.

This \$1-billion investment will be one of the biggest investments from one company in the Sarnia-Lambton area. It will provide many construction jobs and will be of great benefit to my community.

As well, Suncor donated \$500,000 toward the local hospital capital project. This large investment will be important to the future of Ontario. Sarnia-Lambton is glad to have such a good corporate citizen in our community.

WEARING OF BUTTON

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Mr Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent. I was at the film rally this morning, and I would ask permission from the House to wear this button, "Keep Ontario cameras rolling. Keep your promises." Would that be agreed?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on social

policy and move its adoption. I'll send it with page Daniel.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

1350

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I beg leave to present a report on Environet from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Does the member wish to make a statement?

Mr Sterling: So there will not be confusion, this relates to the auditor's report of November 2003. The public accounts committee met last February to deal with those matters with regard to his 2003 annual report. Following the hearings and the committee's deliberations, unanimous reports were prepared by our committee; that is, all members of all parties agreed to this report.

The auditor's objectives for the Ministry of the Environment's Environet strategy were to assess whether the ministry had adequate policies and procedures in place to ensure the Environet systems adequately addressed existing legislative and regulatory requirements. In other words, were they putting into effect the legislation and regulations, and were the technical systems that were being developed meeting the job?

The auditor concluded in his 2003 report that Environet did not provide ministry staff with the required information to ensure that drinking water meets regulatory standards, that hazardous waste movements were properly controlled and that air emissions were properly monitored or reported. As a result, the committee prepared 14 recommendations to the ministry to remedy this situation.

We look forward to the ministry's response to our recommendations and to hearing from them with regard to some of the questions asked in the report.

With that, I would like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes to recognize World AIDS Day.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on World AIDS Day? Agreed.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I stand before the House to once again bring to the attention of honourable members that this is World AIDS Day, a day of commemoration and awareness-raising that falls on December 1.

This year the World AIDS Campaign has chosen to focus on women, girls and HIV. In Canada, as in the rest of the world, increasingly the face of AIDS is a female one. According to the United Nations, nearly half of all adults living with this disease worldwide are now women. In 2003, 29% of new HIV diagnoses in Ontario were women, up from 23% the year before.

The reasons for this are biological and cultural. In many parts of the world, including here in Canada, women are too often economically and socially dependent on men and have too little control over men's sexual behaviour. As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said at the world AIDS conference in Bangkok, "What is needed is real, positive change that will give more power and confidence to women and girls. Change that will transform relations between women and men at all levels of society." He's right. Until the global community does all it can to ensure that all women are treated equally and with dignity and respect, this dire trend will continue.

This is a time in which we reflect on the massive global tragedy that is AIDS. It is a tragedy that has hit this world hard and fast. It's hard to imagine that less than a quarter-century ago, nobody had even heard of AIDS. Yet today AIDS is spreading rapidly around the world, infecting nearly 40 million people and threatening the future of families and nations alike.

In 1981, front-line health providers in New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles began to notice clusters of rare disease outbreaks among men having sex with men. The cause of these outbreaks was a new syndrome that would soon become known as AIDS. Sensing a threat to their continued existence, gay communities around the world, including right here in Ontario, rallied to their defence. Gay people and their friends mobilized to edu-

cate communities, work with health providers, educate governments, and most importantly, help one another.

I was there; I saw it first-hand. I saw how people came together from every diverse corner of the community in response to this crisis. You could say that it was in those dark moments that the gay community itself was born. This community effort spawned a new legion of organizations and agencies led, in large part, by gay men. These organizations are now there in communities all across the province of Ontario, not just in places like Toronto but many other urban centres as well.

They are gifts borne out of sadness but also of hope, a hope that one day they will no longer be needed at all.

With today's drug combinations, fewer people are succumbing to HIV and AIDS. People are living with this disease like people live with many serious chronic illnesses. When we lose people to HIV and AIDS, though, it is no less painful than the first deaths, and it reminds us that there is no cure and that prevention remains a significant challenge. The resurgence of infections in Ontario, especially among women, aboriginals, people from endemic communities and men who have sex with men, compels us to keep talking about HIV and AIDS and to actively resist complacency.

Thanks to trailblazers like June Callwood and Stephen Lewis, I can feel the surge of a new, community-based movement coming. Stephen Lewis is taking the compassionate community spirit that has characterized the HIV/AIDS movement in Ontario to the world stage and is bringing a new consciousness into our living rooms.

In just the past few weeks in the greater Toronto area, an enormous number of events: the other day, Urban AIDS at the Ricoh Coliseum. On Sunday, I went to the People to People organization with the Ethiopian community, a few weeks ago to the Ontario Hospital Association AIDS Africa Gala, and to the launch of the Ontario Hospital Association-Registered Nurses Association of Ontario project in Lesotho. Tomorrow night I have the opportunity to participate in a fundraising event in York region, co-chaired by Marianna Beer, wife of Charles Beer, that will raise \$100,000 for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

We've lost more than 7,000 Ontarians to AIDS since 1981. Today 24,000 Ontarians live with HIV. They're our lovers and our friends, our sisters and our brothers, our sons and our daughters. We admire their courage and dignity very much.

In the face of the reality of HIV, sometimes it's hard to muster hope. We have much to be proud of in Ontario for what we've done in the fight against HIV and AIDS, but we have more to do.

This past summer I had the opportunity to attend the International AIDS Conference in Thailand. I was struck by the sheer determination of everyone there to combat this global challenge.

Here in the province of Ontario this year, we've increased funding to AIDS service organizations by 7%, and worked actively with OACHA, the Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, to help make sure we're ordering our priorities properly. We worked to fix a challenge

with the Trillium drug benefit program. We're working to expand the benefits of anonymous testing.

One of our government's most recent initiatives that I'm most proud of is that the agreement we negotiated with the Ontario Medical Association had, as part of it, introducing the alternative funding program for general practitioners dealing with HIV and AIDS.

Between now and 2006, when Toronto hosts the world AIDS conference, the Ontario AIDS community will work to showcase what we have done collectively locally. I believe that as Canadians, we are at our best when our values are applied globally, when we recognize the power we have to change the world. Powerful evidence abounds that Canadians are lining up right now to do just that—helping to change the world.

1400

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the official opposition to mark World AIDS Day. Today we mark World AIDS Day with 15 minutes of speeches in this place. The latest estimates suggest that during those 15 minutes that we speak today, 145 people will become infected with HIV. Look around you. Look around this chamber. Every 15 minutes, an equal number of people to everyone in this room—MPPs, officials, political staff and those in the public galleries—will be infected. That's five million people every year.

"There is something new and ominous in the course of this epidemic," Peter Piot, the head of the United Nations AIDS program, said last week. It is much more than the ominous infection rates, however. It's the stigma, the marginalization, the prejudice, the discrimination and the fear that has come to exist in all parts of the world.

It is much more than the statistics, though. Each person who is infected and later contracts AIDS has a face and needs our unconditional love and support. It no longer is a disease primarily targeting or affecting gay men and intravenous drug users. It affects people around the world, from all walks of life: men, women and children.

The situation in Africa is indeed, and continues to become, a pandemic. In some countries, almost one third of people in the entire country are infected. Those numbers are almost incomprehensible, but the good news is that around the world we are beginning to make headway. Spending on HIV/AIDS has tripled around the world in recent years. Research continues to be promising. But before that day arrives, public education is not just important, but it is absolutely essential.

Canada can be proud of its record in fighting this disease around the world, but for those of us in this place, here in Ontario, we have an important responsibility to provide the health and social supports that are essential to those who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Today I want to pay special tribute to one organization in Ottawa which supports people living with AIDS. Bruce House was founded in 1988 by a group of concerned citizens, on the premise that everyone has the right to live and die with dignity. Their goal is to help each and every one of their residents to live the best quality of life. They are blessed with a caring team of staff, a

dedicated group of volunteers and, most importantly, a supportive community. Our province is a much better place due to their efforts and the efforts of countless volunteers, professionals and organizations around Ontario.

Today, let us recommit ourselves to prevention, to public education, to research, to treatment and to compassion, not just here in Ontario but indeed right around the world.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I rise today on behalf of the NDP caucus, not with any pleasure, but to acknowledge the grim reality that HIV/AIDS has reached epidemic proportions. We need to make sure we are responding effectively, appropriately and in a timely fashion to this virus.

UN AIDS, the United Nations agency that is in charge of combating this spread of AIDS, reports that there are 42 million HIV-positive people worldwide. There will be five million new infections around the world this year, and 800,000 of them will be children. Some 3.1 million people will die.

HIV is one of the biggest social, economic and health challenges facing the world. It is a global emergency, claiming over 8,000 lives every day. In fact, five people die of AIDS every minute.

This is the 17th World AIDS Day. The first international health day was the result of a summit of health leaders who met in London in January 1988. They realized that a united global effort was required to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS. The aim of World AIDS Day is to educate people about the worldwide challenges and consequences of the epidemic in order to push for change. World AIDS Day is now an annual event in most countries. On December 1, efforts to combat AIDS are observed, and support is given to the continuing fight against this virus.

The international theme for this year's World AIDS Day is Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS. The number of women living with HIV/AIDS worldwide has rapidly increased, and women now account for nearly half of all people living with HIV. In sub-Saharan Africa, 65% of people living with HIV are women, and among young people, it is 75%. The World AIDS Campaign 2004 seeks to address the way women's inequality helps fuel the transmission of HIV and increases the impact of AIDS. The campaign's slogan, "Have you heard me today?" calls for immediate action against the inequalities that put not only women and girls at risk but whole communities as well.

Depression, poverty, violence, and injection drug use are contributing factors to HIV infection among women. Women and girls in developing countries in particular are more susceptible to HIV/AIDS due to a lack of knowledge about the disease, a lack of access to prevention services and the inability to negotiate safer sex practices. Barriers to employment and education, and sexual violence also make girls and women more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In addition, all over the world, women are expected to take the lead in domestic work and provide care to family members. HIV and AIDS have significantly increased the burden of care for many women.

AIDS intensifies the feminization of poverty, particularly in hard-hit countries, and disempowers women. Entire families are also affected, as vulnerability increases when women's time caring for the sick is taken away from other productive tasks in the household.

In Canada, the number of new infections points to disturbing trends. At the end of 2002, Health Canada estimated that 56,000 Canadians were living with HIV infection. Furthermore, the number of women testing positive continues to rise. In 2003, 29% of new HIV diagnoses in Ontario were women, up from 23% the previous year. At the same time, an increasing number of Canadians living with AIDS are women: up from 6.1% before 1994, to 16.5% in 2002. Worldwide, eight million women now have AIDS. It is estimated that in a few years, 13 million women will be infected and four million women will have died from AIDS.

Clearly, HIV and AIDS must concern us all. This is a world in which no society and no group within society can remain immune to AIDS as this epidemic grows. World AIDS Day reminds us that we need to respond appropriately, effectively and aggressively to HIV/AIDS every day.

PIERRE BERTON

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to two minutes to pay tribute to a great Canadian, Pierre Berton, who passed away yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent for the two minutes? Yes.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm honoured to pay tribute to one of Canada's truly great citizens. Yesterday, Pierre Berton boarded his last train, leaving behind, to his country and to his family, an unparalleled legacy as a journalist, historian and social commentator of profound insight, and he was a beloved husband, father and grandfather.

Pierre Berton was a storyteller; indeed, I think that he was our best-loved chronicler. He brought history to life in this country like no one else has in our history, and he was an unapologetic social critic. I think that he taught an entire generation of us to speak our minds plainly and eloquently. He gave Canadians a sense of pride in our past, and in doing so, he gave us a new voice and a new vocabulary to imagine our future.

His bibliography lists 77 published works. They are as diverse as any in Canada, but that's just part of the story. Many of us remember him as a journalist and columnist with the *Toronto Daily Star*, as an editor of *Macleans* magazine. I remember his daily radio commentaries back in the 1960s with Charles Templeton. And who among us—over 30, at least—does not remember being a regular viewer of that quintessentially Canadian program *Front Page Challenge*?

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Despite his suggestions—and you saw it in the paper this morning, the quote saying, "I'm not a historian; I'm

a journalist"—he was a historian. He was one of our most popular historians, and he was a master at his craft. He wrote his stories in a way that transformed history from the private pursuit of academics to the popular pastime for all of us. I believe his biographers will pay special attention to *The National Dream* and *The Last Spike*. Those were seminal works that described Canada in its infant years.

I believe the biographers will talk about Vimy, where Pierre Berton captured the voices of men at the frontiers of war. In particular, I believe the biographers will talk about Klondike and those other great books about Canada's north. Indeed, Pierre Berton gave us a truly new consciousness of the magnificence and the majesty of Canada's north.

In the end, he was a writer who was a master at his profession and who was also committed to the profession. He helped create the Writers' Union of Canada and the Writers Guild of Canada, and he gave thousands and thousands of hours of counselling, mentoring and cajoling to young writers.

As a person who represented him as a constituent, I can also tell you that he was a simple man, truly devoted to his community. Canadians and people all across the world will miss him, but the works that he has left us will fill for decades and decades to come.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): In the last few weeks, some Canadians have been avidly watching their televisions, waiting to see who would be voted the greatest Canadian, yet there are some Canadians we know in our hearts are great without any vote needed. Yesterday, we lost such a Canadian.

Pierre Berton was an author, a journalist, a broadcaster and a patriot. Born in the Yukon, he served in the Canadian army in World War II. He worked as a journalist or an editor for the *Vancouver News-Herald*, the *Vancouver Sun*, *Maclean's* and the *Toronto Star*. He hosted the *Pierre Berton Show* and was a commentator and panellist on *Front Page Challenge*, among other programs.

The awards he has received are almost too numerous to mention. Among many awards, he has received the Governor General's award for creative non-fiction on several occasions. He received awards for columnist of the year, film of the year and a Grand Prix at Cannes for his film *City of Gold* in 1959.

Pierre Berton was a Companion of the Order of Canada and was awarded numerous honorary degrees. He served as chancellor of Yukon College, chair of the Heritage Canada Foundation, chair of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, editor-in-chief of the Canadian Centennial Library and as a member of the board of the book publisher McClelland and Stewart.

Pierre Berton's books are his lasting legacy and it is impossible to imagine what the study of Canadian history would be without them. His love for Canada and its people is written on every page of every book he wrote. More than any other writer in our history, he chose to spend his life telling the stories of Canada to Canadians.

Who can forget reading in *The National Dream* and *The Last Spike* of how a nation of only a few million

bound itself together by building a railway from sea to sea? His book *Vimy* tells of the great battle of World War I, where, at some unknown point during the fighting and carnage, our country moved from being a colony to a nation. *The Invasion of Canada and Flames Across the Border* illustrate the battles of the War of 1812. *The Promised Land* tells of the settling of the west, and *Winter*, while not overtly historical, speaks to Berton's theme of telling us what it means to be a Canadian.

Pierre Berton was a great Canadian. As a writer and broadcaster, he showed his love for our country in everything he did. He was really a teacher, teaching Canadians about ourselves, challenging us to learn our history and heritage, and to pass it on to our children. He will be missed by a whole country.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Canada has lost a great Canadian. As has been noted, Pierre Berton was an incredible author, columnist, broadcaster, radio personality, television personality, but perhaps most of all, he was an iconoclast who admitted that he broke most of the rules. For example, when he wrote his first book, entitled *The Royal Family*, he admitted that he wrote it because he had seven kids and he couldn't make enough money as a journalist. So he had to find another way to pay the rent.

His history has actually drawn some criticism from the more academic authors, but anyone who reads his history knows that it brings Canadian history alive. His history, for example, of the battle of Vimy Ridge, I think, really tells what Canadian soldiers were like. He said:

"In the eyes of many Englishmen, the Canadians were a wild, undisciplined lot and therefore ineffective by British Army standards. There was nothing sheep-like about them. At the Valcartier camp, when the same movie was shown once too often, they had gone crazy, torn down the YMCA tent and set it afire. Now, in the old country, they refused to conform to the rigid class lines that divided privates, non-commissioned officers and officers into watertight social compartments—as in the railway coaches and in the pubs, with their segregated bars.... The British tommies saluted every officer they saw, even across a broad roadway; the Canadians saluted only when they felt like it."

He was an iconoclast, but most of all, as an iconoclast, he dedicated his writing to telling the world what Canadians were all about. So while we may have lost him, I think his writing will have an enduring value for all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, earlier this afternoon, our leader, John Tory, released a copy of the taxpayer-paid partisan political poll you used to manipulate public opinion against Ontario's doctors. This

poll was done a week before the doctors finished voting on your failed offer, and it's clear affirmation of your government's deceptive and double-dealing approach to negotiations with doctors.

This morning, your Minister of Health said your government wants to work with doctors on a successful deal. You've said much the same as recently as two days ago, and we now know these statements were false. Premier—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr Speaker, the language is purely unparliamentary and should be withdrawn. The member should be called to order for doing that.

The Speaker: Order. In regard to the language, I will judge it accordingly. I would ask the member to continue. When there is any such unparliamentary language, I will then call the members to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. As I said again, I will call those orders. Thank you very much. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr Runciman: Premier, what this poll shows is that you had no intention of negotiating in good faith. It shows that, all along, you planned to shove your failed deal down the doctors' throats. How can you justify your manipulative, cynical approach to dealing with doctors?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Something that the honourable member chooses to overlook is that we devoted an entire nine months to negotiations with Ontario doctors, 120 meetings at the main negotiating table. Beyond that, there were four side tables at which 44 separate meetings were also held. We devoted ourselves to a very comprehensive negotiating process, which culminated in an agreement that was unanimously endorsed by all those involved in this process.

The member opposite simply does not have any ground on which to stand when he claims that somehow we have abused the process. We respected the process, and then some. What we're determined to do now, on the basis of that process, is to keep moving.

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Mr Runciman: They designed this in terms of failure. They couldn't take another day, another two days, another three days to try and find a resolution with the doctors.

Premier, in the polling industry, your partisan poll is known as a message test. It's meant to drive public opinion in one specific direction, in this case toward support for your failed offer to doctors. The poll was an extensive sample. In fact, this was an election-style poll meant to sway public opinion instead of sampling it.

That's the problem. This is not an election campaign. We're talking about people's lives and their ability to find a doctor when they need one. You're more interested in engaging in a full-on war—your minister is always engaging in wars; a partisan war with doctors now—and this poll is your road map for doing just that.

This is a shameful and tawdry example of politics and cynical in the extreme. How can you possibly justify manipulating public opinion against our doctors? How can you justify that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The people of Ontario waited over eight years for that government to move forward on primary care reform. We then negotiated for nine long months, in good faith, and came up with an agreement which was unanimously endorsed by ourselves and the representatives of the OMA. So we are not going to wait one day longer. There are 12 million people who have charged us with the responsibility to keep moving and to improve the quality of their health care while treating our doctors fairly.

We're proud to say that Ontario's doctors, as a result of this plan, will be the best paid in the country when it comes to family medicine. They'll be the second-best paid in the country when it comes to a specialty.

We are proud of this agreement and we look forward, again, to moving forward on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Mr Runciman: The Premier is not going to deal with his shameful tactics with respect to this poll. This poll is a damning indictment of the Premier and his government.

Page 30 proves the point. After being pushed into thinking this deal might have some merit, respondents then said that they have no trust in you or your government's ability to deliver the deal and manage our health care system; 71% of respondents said that. They don't trust you. They have no confidence in you.

The Dalton McGuinty brand is damaged goods. People can't believe anything you say. We now know that what you say is what the pollsters tell you to say. No conviction, no beliefs; just do what the polls tell you to do.

Premier, you owe the people of Ontario an explanation about why you spent tax dollars on secret polls to manipulate public opinion about your failed offer to doctors.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm not sure I've ever heard more inconsistencies within the confines of a single statement. First, the member opposite says that we are governing according to polls, and he cites a poll which he claims doesn't support the direction we're pursuing. Secondly, he says that this is a secret poll. He's got a copy of the poll because we made it public.

Let me tell you something else. There used to be a practice in this Legislature where governments tabled their public opinion research: Bill Davis did it; David Peterson did it; Bob Rae did it; and then Mike Harris stopped it. We have resumed that practice. We make the results of our polling public. We table it. In fact, when it comes to the results of our polling taken pre-budget, you can actually find those today, on-line.

We are proud of the research we've had done. We've made that available to the public. We are proud of the plan that we put together with Ontario's doctors. But more importantly, we are proud of the progress we are about to make on behalf of Ontario patients.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Premier. Here are the kinds of words physicians across Ontario are using to describe your public relations activities. Some call them cynical, some call them manipulative and others have said it is nothing more than conniving maneuvering. Premier, I want to know from you, how much money did you spend that could have gone to health care on this cynical effort to malign our physicians? Would you stand in your place and tell us how much money?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I can tell you that the Tories, when in government, spent over \$14 million on polling. I will tell you this: We will never achieve that number.

I can tell you something else, and this is what this is really all about. Let's understand the Conservative Party's track record with respect to medicare. That is the party that opposed our provincial legislation, passed last year, to entrench our commitment to medicare, including the banning of two-tiered billing. That is the party that fought tooth and nail against the Liberal government's initiative to ban extra-billing in Ontario. That is the party that formed the government which was the second last in all of Canada to embrace medicare. That will give you some notion of their antecedents and their lack of commitment to medicare.

This is a party which is committed to moving forward and to making progress when it comes to the next step in the evolution of medicare. We're committed to doing that on behalf of Ontarians, on behalf of our patients and in partnership with our doctors. That's where we're going.

Mr Baird: I say to the Premier, you may be interested in knowing that polls of this type typically cost in excess of \$100,000. There are 64 hospitals around this province that are today, as we speak, having to lay off nurses, and there are two nurses who will be laid off to pay for your cynical attempt to manipulate public opinion. At the same time as you are trotting around Ontario telling people that there is no more money for doctors, telling people that there is no more money for hospitals, at the same time as you're delisting chiropractors, physiotherapy and optometry services, why would you spend considerable sums of public money to support your cynical attempt to malign our physicians, and why did you leak this poll before your cheap trick last Friday?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Well, this is all interesting coming from a representative of a former government that paid \$300,000 annually to one of their spin doctors—just to remind them about that, Speaker.

I have bad news for members of the opposition. Support for our plan for health care is building. Today we heard from the Ontario Long Term Care Association. Karen Sullivan, president of the association, "noted that access to physician services for long-term-care residents has been a growing concern for homes throughout the province for the past three-four years, particularly as residents are older, frailer and have more complex medical conditions than ever before.

"We have taken every opportunity," she says, "to raise this issue with government, the OMA and the On-

tario Long Term Care Physicians association and we are encouraged that the proposed agreement with the OMA speaks directly to this."

What we have done is we have taken \$10 million through this plan. We've invested in special on-call after-hours coverage and a monthly management fee to support residents right in their nursing homes. People throughout the province, as they gain a better understanding of what we're trying to do on their behalf, are saying, "We want a part of that. We want to join that. We want to improve the quality of health care in our province."

The Speaker: Before I get to your final supplementary, let me just caution you about some of the bordering unparliamentary language that has been happening. Just be more careful about your language.

Mr Baird: I say to the Premier, you have the largest office of any Premier in the history of Ontario: 54 staff. You would think that one of those 54 could write you an answer when you come into this place to debate the public issues.

The people of Ontario just can't be fooled; 71% of them in your own poll said they don't trust your government enough to run the deal and deliver the benefits the government says it will deliver. Not only do Ontario patients and taxpayers not trust you; Ontario physicians don't trust you either.

Premier, I'd like you to stand in your place and tell us: What is the net cost to taxpayers in Ontario of this agreement that you're so proud of? Will you stand in your place and give that, or are you afraid to?

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Hon Mr McGuinty: That information has been public for a long time now. In 2007-08, it will cost us \$1.077 billion. But you'll notice, Speaker—

Mr Baird: But you moved all the money up. If you move it all up under a four-year—

Hon Mr McGuinty: Listen, we are delighted to give you a briefing to explain the agreement.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): He doesn't want a briefing.

Hon Mr McGuinty: You will notice, Speaker, that the members opposite shrink away from the substance of the agreement. We are proud of this agreement. They don't stand up and say—or maybe they do. Maybe they're saying that \$1.077 billion and making our Ontario doctors first in Canada when it comes to compensation is not enough. If they're telling us to put more money in, then they should tell us that, because a few weeks ago they told us it was too much.

You will notice that they do not speak about the substance of the deal. We will continue to speak about the substance of this plan. We will talk about the fact that it's bringing more doctors into underserved communities. It's going to encourage doctors to practise more preventive medicine. It's going to encourage doctors to spend more time with seniors. It's going to encourage doctors to spend more time with home care and nursing home patients. It's going to encourage doctors to stay in

Ontario, to work with us and to improve the quality of care for all Ontarians.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. This morning, thousands of workers in the film and television production industry came to Queen's Park to protest your failure to increase the television and film production tax credit. You may prefer not to remember this, but 15 months ago you promised to increase the tax credit on domestic film and television production from 20% to 33% for labour costs, and for feature films you promised to increase the tax credit from 20% to 40%. But once again you've failed to fulfill your promises. Premier, will you immediately increase the film and television production tax credit, or is this just a game—another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm proud of that commitment. We look forward to honouring that commitment. I'm not going to honour it today, if that's what the member opposite is asking me, but I will remind the Ontario film industry that there is not a single, even passing, reference found to that industry and its importance to our province in the NDP platform—just so we're clear as to who stood up for the industry.

We understand the importance of that industry and we look forward to working with them to create a more competitive environment for them.

Mr Hampton: Premier, these are your promises; remember? You're the one who made the promises. You may not understand the urgency of this situation, but across Ontario 50,000 jobs depend on this industry, and today those 50,000 workers are worried that they may lose their jobs because of your failure to keep your promise. You promised Ontario film and television production workers and the industry that you would implement specific actions to sustain their jobs, but just a few weeks ago your finance minister said, "Ontario will not participate in the unhealthy bidding war with upping and upping tax credits." Premier, when did your promise to the film and television production industry become unhealthy bidding?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The only urgency the leader of the NDP is sensing is an urgency to jump on a perceived bandwagon with respect to this particular issue. We were there from the outset. We were there before it became politically fashionable. We worked with the industry, developed a good understanding of the nature of the challenges that we've got to grapple with, and understood the nature of the competitiveness of this North American market.

One of the first things that we did as the government, and I'm sure the members opposite will be interested in hearing this, was to establish a permanent office in Los Angeles—by the way, in partnership with the film industry—so that we can better market this province, and

this community in particular, as a destination when it comes to film production.

We have a strong and abiding partnership with the film industry. We look forward to working with them, and we look forward to honouring our commitment.

Mr Hampton: Well, Premier, you talk about bandwagons. The only bandwagon around here is the bandwagon of your broken promises. They just go on forever.

These are 50,000 families, families to whom you promised only 15 months ago that you were going to implement tax credits to ensure that this industry was sustained and continued to grow. And now, all of a sudden, you don't want to hear about your promises.

This is what is happening elsewhere: The US Congress has introduced new tax credits for production crews. California has done the same. Manitoba has a film and television tax credit of 35%.

You promised very specifically that you were going to increase these tax credits to ensure that Ontario jobs, Ontario workers, were not disadvantaged. It is about your promise, Premier. Are you going to fulfill your promise, or is this just another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I regret to inform the member opposite that we will be keeping this promise, and we look forward to doing that.

I know the member is not interested in any good news, but there is some good news. The Ontario Media Development Corp, which opened this new marketing office in Los Angeles, reports that, after we took office, it has already attracted 15 major productions worth almost \$105 million to Ontario.

Let me say that our government understands the nature of the challenges facing our film industry, and we understood that quite some time ago. That's why we incorporated it in our platform. That's why we intend to continue to work with the industry to ensure that we have a competitive environment here, to ensure that we have an enhanced tax credit system, to ensure that we'll have a thriving film industry long into the future. We look forward to working with the industry.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier, I guess all of those people out there, according to the Premier, are just misinformed.

I want to ask you about another promise you made, another statement you made. You said, "Our most vulnerable citizens—seniors and children—should be able to go outside in the summer without consulting a smog index." We found out yesterday that it's no good to them anyway. The Provincial Auditor tells us that under your government, the air quality index doesn't even work. The tool that is supposed to tell us when we're having a smog day is so outdated and inaccurate that no one in Ontario really knows the truth any more about our air quality.

Some 92% of pollution-related deaths and hospitalizations occur on days when you say the air quality is good or very good. Premier, is this what you meant when

you said that people shouldn't be consulting the smog index?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I find it very interesting that the leader of the third party is giving us a lecture on our plan for air quality, when he has very clearly indicated to the people of Ontario that keeping coal-fired generation in the province is part of his plan. I say, shame on you. That has a very negative impact on air quality in the province of Ontario.

I'm happy to say that our government is working with the federal government to improve air quality standards and to consider the health effects and identify those contaminants that have a negative impact on the health of the people of the province. Our government believes that we need to work with the federal government to build that body of evidence and move forward with our plan for cleaner air, which, by the way, is consistent with our plan to replace coal-fired generation in Ontario.

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Mr Hampton: For the record, you should just admit you're not going to keep the promise, and you should admit it now rather than trying to fool people once again. The coal-fired plants aren't closed now, and they're not going to close any time soon.

But I want to ask you again about the original question. The Ontario Medical Association says the annual cost of air pollution in Ontario is \$10 billion, but your own budget says you're going to cut a further 12% from the Ministry of the Environment's budget. One of the programs on the chopping block is the smog patrol, which monitors pollution on highways and roads throughout the province. The McGuinty government says that you're going to do a wonderful job on preventing smog, but then we read the fine print—you're going to eliminate the smog patrol.

The Provincial Auditor slammed your record. He said the smog patrol should improve inspection targets and follow up on violations. I guess improving it means the McGuinty government's going to cut it. Is that what it means, Minister?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The member opposite is in denial: Denial number one, that coal-fired generation has a very negative impact on air quality; and two, that our government has the strength and fortitude to press forward and replace that coal generation with clean, renewable, safe energy for the people of Ontario.

I want to tell the honourable member what we are doing. Last spring, we announced a five-point plan for cleaner air. We are going to cap NO_x and SO_x emissions. We are going to add 29 contaminants to the list of contaminants that we check for when air quality is monitored. We are going to improve the air dispersion modelling that's in place right now. Right now, that technology is 30 years old, and we're going to bring that up to date. We are also going to take a science-based approach to

ensuring that our focus, our energy and our resources are going to ensure that the testing—smog patrol, for example—will test heavy-duty vehicles, not light-duty, where the majority of nasty emissions come from.

Mr Hampton: This is about cutting the budget of the Ministry of the Environment by a further 12%. This is about cutting the very people who work on smog patrol the day after the Provincial Auditor says that you're doing a lousy job. You try to cover it up by calling it "realignment," but when you read the notes, it's very clear. This isn't a realignment; you're cutting 12 of the people who are out there doing smog patrol.

I say this to the minister and the Premier: Since when did reducing smog, since when did improving air quality, mean you lay off the very people who are out there doing the smog patrol?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: As usual, the honourable member is only presenting part of the information. He's not telling the members of this House that our smog patrol initiative is going to focus on the heavy-duty polluting vehicles like big rigs, dump trucks, buses, commercial vehicles, taxi fleets and used cars. Those are going to be the vehicles that we focus our resources on.

I also want to remind the House that our government has committed to directing two cents of our gas tax to support those municipalities that will invest in transit. That's going to get more vehicles off the road. Last week, we announced an ethanol initiative. Our ethanol initiative in the year 2007 will be the equivalent of removing 200,000 vehicles off the roads in Ontario. That's our commitment to clean air in the province, and I'm proud of the record we have.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier. The Ontario film and television tax credit was introduced in the 1996 budget by the Progressive Conservative government at the time and enhanced from time to time after that in subsequent budgets. It was based on the realization, because of the work of Richard Florida, Roger Martin and others, that Toronto and Ontario had a marvellous opportunity to support an industry which could grow amazingly here, which it has. That path continued through the late 1990s and at the beginning of this century and recently, last year and this year, has suffered substantial decline.

You promised on page 13 of the Liberal election platform, "We will boost the Ontario film and television tax credit from 20% to 33%." As you know, the decline is happening. The competition is there, not only in other parts of Canada but in Louisiana and other places in the United States. Will you now take the necessary steps to bring the tax credit up to date, as you promised you would do?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I want to inform the members of this House and the public at large that there is not a

single passing reference to the need to enhance the Ontario film tax credit in the Tory platform. This whole notion of finding religion is apparently contagious. We were there from the outset. We understand the nature of the industry, its complexities and the challenges it is facing at present. That's exactly why we incorporated that commitment in our platform and that's exactly why we will deliver on that.

Mr Flaherty: It's interesting that the Premier wants to blame the opposition for his promises. No one made you do it. No one made you say that; nobody made you put that on page 13 of your platform. You based it on information you had—

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: No, the Tories actually brought in the tax credit, Minister of Tourism. That's who brought it in. You've been here so long that you probably even remember that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The Minister of Tourism and the member for Whitby-Ajax seem to want to have a discussion. That's better done outside. If you want to direct—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm asking the member for Whitby-Ajax to direct his questions through this Chair. Proceed.

Mr Flaherty: Thank you, Speaker. The promise was made by the now Premier: "We will boost the Ontario film and television tax credit from 20% to 33%." The auditor reports yesterday that the government has no information about the impact of the tax credit. Not only that, but the government agency involved and two ministries—culture and finance—can't even decide what to measure. That's what the auditor tells us.

So I say to the Premier, you have no new information, according to the auditor. What you have is a promise you made last year that you would take this action. The hundreds and hundreds of people who were here this morning in the rain, many of whom are in service industries supporting the film industry, want some action, and they want it now, not three years from now. What's the timetable for increasing the credit?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Apparently, the member opposite is now a man of the people and he's very concerned about their daily challenges in life.

The reason we included this commitment in our platform is because we understand how important this industry is to this province, to the community of Toronto and the greater Toronto area in particular. We understand how many people are employed in that industry, how many families count on that income. That's exactly why we incorporated that commitment in our platform.

I'm not sure about the inconsistency put forward by the member. He says we don't have any data that supports the very existence of the tax credit itself. On the other hand, he's saying that notwithstanding that, we should proceed with its enhancement. We, unlike the members opposite, have been committed to this from the

outset. That's why we put it in our platform and that's why we'll deliver on that.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. In September, you announced the closure of the three remaining regional centres that house some of this province's most vulnerable people. These are people who call those centres their home. These are people who have lived in those centres, most of them, all of their lives. These individuals have severe developmental, medical and psychological conditions. They need and deserve constant and extraordinary care, care that is not available in almost every community living program.

Madam Minister, I'm asking you to talk to the families. I'm asking you if the change that you are advocating can be tolerated by their families. I'm asking you if you have any plans—because we have not seen any and we do not believe there are any—to manage the change. They demand to know where their children will be sent, and you have not provided answers. My question is simple: Why are you proceeding with the closures when you have no budgeted funds, no buildings to accommodate these poor individuals, and no plans to care for them?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I very much appreciate the question. The members of your own caucus will know the history of these three remaining institutions across Ontario. All members of this House were here in the beginning, in 1987, when the decision was made to close institutions in Ontario. What happened in the last five years was that about 1,000 people moved from the institutions into the community. What we're doing is maintaining that same flow from institutions into the community, no more, no less. The difference is that we're down to the last 1,000 people in these institutions. I have had an opportunity to meet with people in institutions, to speak with the staff there. I am planning to do much more in informing parents.

The difficulty is that we had to announce the closure and set the date so we can go about the plan, which is a five-year plan. We were not prepared to be clandestine about going behind people's backs to plan a closure and not have them be a part of this plan. Now that we've made the announcement, that is exactly what we're engaging in: development of that plan.

1450

Mr Prue: It appears that the plan is, as you say, ongoing, but it has not been made. Everyone agrees that community living is ideal for those individuals who can handle it. I commend what has happened in the last 10 years for the majority of the individuals involved. But what has happened now is that we have 1,000 individuals who have severe problems. You haven't taken the time to date to talk to the families or to the caregivers who look

after these regional centre residents. You have dictated to them that the families have five years to find alternatives, yet there is a seven-year waiting list for group home placement into the other facilities. How can they make plans when in five years there won't even be a space for their children?

Minister, I'm asking you to visit those centres, all three of them. I am asking you to meet with the families and with the caregivers. I'm asking you—and I know it's busy, so I'm asking you to do it when the House is in recess—will you agree to meet with these families in the period between December and February? Will you come to the Huronia Centre, which is having a meeting on January 8? Will you stop your ill-conceived plans, work with the staff and families and invest in a system that has proven over the years that it works?

Hon Ms Pupatello: Actually, on the discussions I've had with the organizations of parents that represent people: We spoke with them, I spoke to them individually, before we made our announcement so that they wouldn't hear about it on the news. They heard it directly from me. We told them then that we will be on-site, that we will bring parents with us whose children were also in institutions and moved into the community. We are bringing parents with us who were extremely angry, frustrated and scared of that move and who today realize it was the best thing that could have happened for their children. We understand this fear. None of us can live and walk in those shoes. We are doing our absolute best to be open about this process, to make sure they will be involved in a plan for their children.

There are varying degrees of needs with the people who live in institutions today, the 1,000 who are left in Ontario. One individual who lives there actually works all day in the community and then comes to his home in the evening. Another individual goes for five-mile walks on his own, every day, outside. So it is extremely varying in terms of what their needs are.

There are also very high needs for people who live in this institution. It is our job to be certain, when those plans are made, that there will be supports available, as they need them, in the community or they will not be moved out. We are determined to do this well.

GO TRANSIT

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): My question is for the Minister of Transportation and highways. Commuters who live in Mississauga, Brampton and neighbouring communities crowd the GO trains on the Milton line every day. If we had more trains, we'd fill each and every one. If we had more capacity on the existing trains, commuters could fill that capacity. Specifically, in the area I represent, the riding of Mississauga West, commuters in Streetsville, Meadowvale, Lisgar, Churchill Meadows and Erin Mills face the frustrating prospect of a daily commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads such as Derry Road, Aquitaine, Battleford, Britannia, Eglinton and Burnhamthorpe to connect to the

Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO stations. Minister, will there be any relief from this east-west commute with the new GO train station in the northwest corner of the city, and is there any way we can increase capacity on the existing GO line?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the honourable member from Mississauga West for asking this question. I want to assure him that I represent the neighbouring riding, so I'm very much aware of the issue he's talking about. As the member is aware, earlier this year we partnered with the federal government to announce about a \$1-billion investment in GO Transit, and some of this investment will actually work its way through to make some of the improvements the member is talking about. I know he has a keen interest in the Lisgar GO station. That is in GO Transit's capital plan. We're going to move ahead with that GO station and we are in the process of acquiring the property to do so.

Mr Delaney: Thank you, Minister. As a resident of Lisgar in that northwest corner of Mississauga, I look forward to being among the first to ride that inaugural GO train out of the new station of Lisgar. Perhaps you would join me as we both make our way to work. I can speak for the commuters of northwest Mississauga in urging you and GO Transit to move forward on this very urgent need, to help more people leave their cars at home.

Minister, will GO Transit rail commuters on the Bradford, Georgetown, Stouffville and Lakeshore corridors see any new capital expansion of their services as well? For those of us who enjoy excellent rail commuter service when the good weather is in, but who suffer through annual delays during the cold and the snow, can you outline what steps GO Transit has taken to enhance its ability to get the trains to their destinations, on time and in bad weather?

Hon Mr Takhar: I want to thank the honourable member again for asking this question. As I have indicated already, we have committed to making a \$1-billion investment, along with the federal government, in GO Transit operations. Recently we opened a GO Transit station in Gwillimbury, and the honourable member from the other side was there as well. We are expected to open two or three more GO Transit stations.

As to some of the issues we faced in winter last year, GO Transit has already put a contingency plan in place to have heat below so that we don't face the same kind of issues this winter. We look forward to having smoother operations as we move forward.

HERITAGE LEGISLATION

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Culture. This morning the six largest church denominations in Ontario, representing more than three million members in this province, presented a joint brief to the standing committee on justice policy. Some of their representatives are here with us today in the

gallery. In that brief they strongly opposed parts of Bill 60, which amends the Ontario Heritage Act. They said it creates serious problems for them as the largest non-government holder of designated buildings under the act, and that your ministry never consulted them about these changes. They said they believed these serious problems could have been resolved with this consultation to everyone's benefit, but no one has talked to them. Minister, why did you not consult with Ontario churches before introducing this bill?

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): First of all, the consultation regarding the amendment to the Heritage Act was started with the previous government. We continued the consultations, and we had a wide consultation. We recognize the churches have a problem. I have met with them. We have listened to their concerns. I want to reassure them that this provision we are proposing to put into the act has been present in about seven provinces in Canada. So I don't think they need to worry, because it's the time provision that is present and the churches across these provinces are under this time provision.

1500

Mrs Munro: Minister, I appreciate the fact that you acknowledged the work that was done by the previous government. However, I would suggest to you that that's not an excuse for the lack of consultation that has taken place.

The churches say that a fundamental problem with the bill is that it treats all designated property owners as either governments that can meet rising maintenance costs out of tax revenues or as commercial enterprises that can raise the price of their products, but there is no place in the structure for congregations who pay the bills from a Sunday morning collection plate and who are designated over their objections.

These churches may have to take money from programs such as Out of the Cold to meet the requirements imposed upon them by this bill. Some growing congregations will not be able to adapt their buildings for affordable housing or other community programs because of this bill.

Minister, you made reference in your response to other provinces. I suggest you look at the fact that there are other provinces that do have opportunities for buildings such as this. Are you now prepared to delay passing this bill and to take the time to consult with the churches to resolve their concerns?

Hon Mrs Meilleur: As I said, we have met with the churches and they have explained their concerns. We have reviewed the concerns with staff.

I wanted to remind the member of the opposite party that she supported the amendment to the bill. She voted for it on second reading.

Of course, there is concern. There is a process built into the proposed amendment whereby they can appeal it to the OMB. So if they wanted to demolish the churches and they were refused by the municipality, they will have recourse before the OMB.

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, the auditor's report on the government's autism program noted that children are regularly shortchanged IBI hours that they were promised.

Adam Shane was accepted into the program in July 2003. He was promised 24 hours of IBI every week. From mid-August 2003 to September 2004, he only received 15 hours of IBI treatment weekly. This September, Erinoak increased his IBI treatment to 20 hours a week. But now, the clinical director has told Adam's mom she wants to transition him out of the program even though his senior IBI therapist who works with him says he needs the IBI that he was promised and he's not due to turn six until September. Erinoak wants to reduce his hours after Christmas to 18 per week, and then down to 15 after the March break.

Minister, what will you do to ensure that Adam Shane will receive the treatment that he was promised?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for bringing me another specific case. I can tell you that the other specific cases the honourable member brought forward have been looked at by the ministry, and this one will be as well. If there is any rule or criteria that is not being adhered to to give this boy the therapy he deserves and needs, we will look into it right away.

With respect to the program as a whole, we took the Provincial Auditor's report, we appreciated the report, and we are looking at better ways of funding that particular program.

Ms Martel: Minister, there's an additional problem facing Adam, one that I made your ministry staff aware of on September 14 and again in the estimates on October 26. Adam started afternoon kindergarten this September. Even though his teacher, his special education teacher and his principal all agreed that his IBI therapist should be allowed into the classroom, the Peel District School Board said no, so he cannot get IBI at school. At the same time, this September Erinoak gave Adam more hours of treatment but they changed their hours of operation. So in order to access the additional treatment, his mom has to pull him out of school two afternoons a week to attend Erinoak.

Minister, it's wrong that the Peel District School Board will not allow his IBI therapist into the classroom. It's also wrong that Erinoak would change its hours of operation so that it cannot support this family. What will you do to force Erinoak, a service provider of your ministry, to change its hours so that it can support this family and not force Adam to miss any more school?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I will let the honourable member know that I will look into this matter, because if this boy is under six and he meets all the criteria, he should be getting IBI therapy.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday, the Provincial Auditor reported several abuses involving the Drive Clean program. I'm certain that most Ontarians understand the importance of monitoring and limiting tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks. After all, cars and trucks are major contributors to the smog that threatens the health of many Ontarians and compromises their quality of life. However, I'm certain that most Ontarians cannot tolerate abuses of the Drive Clean program like those that the Provincial Auditor has reported.

Minister, what is the government doing to prevent continued abuses of the Drive Clean program?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I want to assure the members of this House and the people of Ontario that, first of all, the Ministry of the Environment welcomes the report of the Provincial Auditor. It certainly informs us as a ministry. It's a program that we need to pay some attention to.

With respect to the duplicate certificates, this was an issue that was identified in 2000, that duplicate certificates were being used to process drivers' licences. When we came to office in December, my ministry, along with the Ministry of Transportation, began to work on the problem. I'm very happy to report that as of July 2004, no longer were duplicate certificates allowed to be used for the purchase of drivers' licences.

I think it's important to remind the people of Ontario as well that the vast majority of people who provide the testing services for the people in the province operate legitimately. But the very clear message of our government is, when you offer Drive Clean services, if you cheat, you are out.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'd like to thank the minister for the actions that the government is taking to prevent continued abuses of the Drive Clean program. I'm certain that the people of Ontario will be encouraged to hear that the government intends to crack down on any fraudulent activities involving the Drive Clean program.

The introduction of cleaner fuels like ethanol, reported improvements in vehicle emissions control technology and increased usage of public transit must combine to warrant periodic reviews of a vehicle emissions monitoring program like Drive Clean. For example, I have heard that now more than half of the cars on Ontario roads are 1997 models or newer. That must mean that many more cars now have on-board diagnostic systems that monitor the emissions.

Minister, knowing these things, moving forward, what role will a vehicle emissions monitoring program like Drive Clean have in the government's plan to clean up the air and protect human health?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Our government is certainly committed to cleaner air for the people of Ontario. We believe that the Drive Clean program has had an impact on reducing pollutants in the air.

I also want to say to the people of Ontario that if there's any question about the facility they might use, if

they want to see if there is a history for that facility of perhaps a questionable nature, they can check the Drive Clean site.

With respect to our plan going forward, it was part of the initial Drive Clean plan that there would be a review in 2006-07. What I announced yesterday is that my ministry will conduct that review beginning in January 2005. I'm looking for a report back from that review by the summer of 2005.

It is a program that we do want to pay some attention to, and we believe that we need some information on it. We're looking for recommendations from a science-based perspective. We think that it's very important. As the member has identified, there's new technology out there, and we believe it's time to look at this program from that perspective.

GREENBELT LEGISLATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Agriculture: In a news release yesterday, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture president, Ron Bonnett, called on the McGuinty Liberal government to slow down the greenbelt process to ensure that you get it right. Specifically, he asked you to extend the deadline for submissions on the draft plan and to send this bill to an all-party committee before it is called for a third reading vote.

Minister, the official opposition agrees with this request. Do you?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): As the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I'm the minister responsible for making sure that we stand up for farmers in this province. One of the things we want to make sure of very clearly in this province is that we leave a legacy for future generations, and that legacy we're going to leave behind is the greenbelt. We're going to make sure that agricultural land is there for farming, that agricultural land is there for raising crops. We do not want agricultural land to be paved over. We do not want agricultural land raising subdivisions. We're going to stand up and make sure that we preserve that agricultural land.

In your supplementary, I'll be very happy to refer your question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who has the lead on this issue.

1510

Mr Hudak: Obviously Ontario farmers, particularly those in the greenbelt, aren't going to be too happy with your ducking a very simple question. They're going to want you to get off the wanted posters and get out there and advocate for Ontario farmers.

Ron Bonnett said in his release, "There are too many unknowns by citizens about the impact of the legislation and an obvious lack of understanding by government officials of the impacts of the legislation on"—Ontario—"farmers."

The official opposition, like Ontario farmers, believes in protecting green space. We have done that successfully

through Lands for Life, the Oak Ridges moraine plan, which won an award, the Niagara Escarpment plan, the Bruce Trail; but when we do it, we do it based on good science and a plan to make sure it works. Ontario farmers are asking for the time to make sure you get it right, municipal leaders are asking for time to get it right and concerned taxpayers are asking you to take the time to get it right. I ask you, Minister, will you please say yes to the OFA's request and send this to an all-party committee? Let's make sure we get the greenbelt right, based on good science.

Hon Mr Peters: I'll refer the question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): First of all, we have done more consultation on the greenbelt over the last year—through our greenbelt task force, which had at least 10 or 12 consultation sessions, through the consultations that have been held recently where we've gone to eight different communities and listened to the people—than that party ever did on the Oak Ridges moraine.

Secondly, let me make it absolutely clear that although we hope this legislation will pass by December 15, we have made it clear that we hope to pass the actual mapping and the regulation under the legislation within 45 days after December 15. The farming community is aware of that, all the people we've spoken to are aware of that, because we want to make sure the final delineation of the greenbelt is right and correct. That's why we're going over all the submissions and that's why the mapping will be done at some time before February 1, next year.

TFO

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Ma question est à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Madame la ministre, vous allez savoir que la dernière élection, dans votre plateforme électorale vous avez promis très clairement l'autonomie à TFO.

Je suis venu à l'Assemblée au mois de mai, l'année passée, et j'ai demandé : « Qu'est-ce que vous faites pour garder votre engagement? » Vous m'avez dit, à travers l'autre ministre, « Oh, ne vous inquiétez pas. On va augmenter la représentation des francophones sous la commission de trois à six. »

Madame la ministre, comment expliquez-vous qu'aujourd'hui on a seulement deux personnes sur le CA de TFO qui sont francophones? Vous avez promis qu'ils étaient pour au moins six.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Merci de la question. C'est une question très pertinente. Je veux vous dire qu'à TFO, premièrement, il faut attendre qu'il y ait des vacances avant de nommer des gens. À chaque fois qu'il y a une vacance, on nomme un francophone. Alors, on a des francophones qui vont être nommés parce que c'est un engagement que l'on a pris, et on veut continuer dans cette même veine-là.

Alors, pour la deuxième question, la question supplémentaire, je vais la référer à la ministre responsable de TFO-TVO. Merci.

M. Bisson: Madame la ministre, les seules vacances qu'on va avoir sont des vacances des promesses brisées que votre gouvernement donne au reste de l'Ontario. C'est clair. Vous avez promis dans l'élection—on était pour avoir une autonomie pour TFO. Ce qu'on apprend : pas d'autonomie. On parle même de réduire le budget. Là, on arrive à la Chambre après l'élection et M^{me} Chambers dit, en anglais : « Don't worry. There are 13 members on the board. We're going to give you six. » We were three then; we're now down to two.

Madame la ministre, vous avez brisé votre promesse quand ça vient à ce que vous avez promis dans les élections, et là, vous brisez même votre mot sur ce que vous avez dit à cette Assemblée le printemps passé. Qui, de ce bord-là, est préparé à parler pour TFO et s'assurer que TFO continue dans le futur avec une gestion francophone et un budget qui fait du bon sens?

Hon Mrs Meilleur: I will refer the question to the minister responsible for TFO-TVO, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'm really happy to respond to this question. The third party has expressed supposed interest in the film industry today. I think their area of preferred entertainment is actually fiction. We actually have 13 board members, and of those 13 we have made a commitment to five francophone members. At this point we have four, because we actually did two more appointments today. You should be up to date. So it's done. I can also tell you that we are working on number five, because in fact we would have five francophone members on that board except that, unfortunately, we have just had one resign because of illness. We're working on number five as we speak.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): My question is for the Minister of Energy. As you know, the Lakeview coal generating plant is located in Mississauga South. The people of Mississauga South, in Peel region and in Toronto are certainly looking forward to better air quality once the Lakeview coal plant has been shut down.

In July, Toronto public health released a study which estimates that the air pollution in the city contributes to about 1,700 premature deaths and 6,000 admissions to hospital each year. It is clear that closing the Lakeview plant will help clean up our air. However, as you are aware, when this plant stops burning coal, it stops producing electricity. Could you tell us what the government is doing to ensure that we have enough clean electricity in Ontario going forward?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The member is absolutely right. Lakeview accounts for 26% of the GTA's SO₂ emissions and 8% of its NO_x emissions. Lakeview will be the first

coal-fired station to close. I can confirm for the member that it will close on or before April 30, 2005, as per plan and in spite of the objections of the Conservatives and New Democrats to that important initiative.

We have taken a number of steps already to ensure an adequate electricity supply in the greater Toronto area. First, Hydro One has already redirected a number of transmission lines to provide for that. But more importantly, this government is the first government in many, many years to provide new, clean, non-hydro renewable electricity: wind power, biogas. The Conservatives ignored that; the NDP ignored that. This government, under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, has assured and made certain that conservation will be part of this province's culture. The New Democrats cancelled all conservation programs in Ontario, and the former Tory energy minister said it didn't really work.

We're moving ahead with a cleaner, greener electricity plan, and because of your efforts and the efforts of other members from the Mississauga area, Lakeview will close on or before April 30, 2005.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario about supporting chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I have signed my name.

1520

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have thousands more petitions from people concerned about cuts to chiropractic services. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario's three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

"Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario's regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into centres of excellence to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they might live."

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Tilbury, Blenheim, Chatham, Wheatley and beyond.

PET SCANNER

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition signed by 202 people who are supporting that funding be provided for all patients who use the new PET scanner at

St Joseph's Hospital in London. The majority of these signatures are those of the cancer survivors who were taking part in our Woodstock Cancer Relay for Life on June 18, 2004. As I said, there are 202 signatures on it, to provide that funding for the hospital.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario's three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

"Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousand more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario's regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into centres of excellence to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

It is signed by about 300 people, primarily from the Orillia and southwestern Ontario areas. I am in agreement and affix my signature thereto.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Whereas, since Bill 99 was passed in 1997 by the Harris government, the situation for injured workers with respect to income, recognition of their injuries by the compensation system, treatment by the employer and opportunities for re-employment has dramatically deteriorated; and

"Whereas employers have more power today to frustrate and intimidate injured workers and are less accountable for their actions; and

"Whereas employers are increasingly putting greater effort into avoiding reporting of claims and associated costs than into preventing injuries; and

"Whereas the compensation system is increasingly more concerned about minimizing costs for employers than ensuring full compensation for workers; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the provincial government to ensure fair and adequate compensation for workers and to ensure healthy and safe workplaces;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the provincial government to immediately:

"Change the name of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board back to the Workers' Compensation Board;

"Implement full cost-of-living protection for injured workers;

"Establish full coverage for all workers and all work-related disabilities and diseases under the compensation system;

"Abolish experience rating which encourages employers to, and rewards them for, hiding occupational injury and illness by giving them money back from their premiums;

"Enforce health and safety in the workplace by hiring more inspectors and sending them to workplaces without giving advance notice to the employer;

"Enforce employer re-employment obligations and abolish provisions which deem workers to be receiving wages from jobs they don't have;

"Conduct a complete review of the workers' compensation system in order to write new legislation which ensures fundamental benefits and rights for workers, including survivors of workers killed on the job, as called for in the CAW Jobs or Full Compensation platform."

I put my signature to this petition as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan. It reads:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the

May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I affix my signature in support of this petition.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) expired March 31, 2000; and

“Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

“Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

“Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

“Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario.”

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

“Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

“Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and...

“Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital’s catchment area;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community.”

I have signed a previous copy of this petition, and I give this to Nicholas.

1530

TUITION

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

“Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

“Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students.”

I’ve affixed my signature as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I agree with this petition, and I’ve signed it as well.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

As I am in agreement with this, I affix my signature.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is "Save Our Regional Centres for People with Developmental Disabilities." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario's three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

"Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and,

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario's regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into 'centres of excellence' to provide specialized services and support to

Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF

Mr Bryant moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act /
Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil
exécutif.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to conduct this afternoon's proceedings on Bill 17 as follows:

The time available for debate, up till 5:50 pm, shall be apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At 5:50 pm, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of Bill 17 without further debate or amendment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): If the debate doesn't take till 5:50 pm, I assume we would adjourn thereafter?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Agreed? Agreed.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: According to the motion, if the debate goes to 5:50, we put the question at that time. If the debate collapses before that time, I will then put the question at 10 minutes to 6.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: At the time. There, now it's clear—and the vote will be deferred.

OK, we're ready to go. Mr Bryant?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): It's a pleasure to lead off the debate on this bill. We believe the Legislature matters. I hope everybody in this Legislature agrees with that. This bill is about accountability. It's about setting up some minimum rules to ensure accountability in this House. We're doing so by way of a bill which, if passed, will entrench some rules as a commitment of this government to ensure that that critical moment of accountability that happens in our parliamentary democracy—that is to say, question period—is in fact respected and observed in a fashion that sees the Premier and members of the executive council here on a regular basis, in attendance for question period.

The bill underlies our commitment to having the Legislature work better for the people of Ontario. We are

taking action to strengthen our democratic institutions. Bill 17 is one example of that commitment in action, and I'll be speaking about a few others.

Before I forget—there are going to be some distinguished speakers, I know, on both sides of the House speaking to this—I'll be sharing my time with the members for Kitchener Centre, London-Fanshawe, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and Bramalea-Gore Malton-Springdale.

In December of last year, as the first step toward renewing democracy in Ontario, pursuant to our commitment made well before the last election to renew our democratic institutions, we made a number of changes and announced those changes, including amendments to the Executive Council Act.

If passed, the bill would require cabinet ministers to attend at least two thirds of all question periods over a government's term in office. We believe that cabinet ministers should be in the Legislature to be asked questions in question period, participate in debate and be publicly accountable to the people of Ontario for their actions. It should be self-evident. I think most people would agree that cabinet ministers and the first minister, the Premier, should be here to answer questions. It's obviously a fundamental part of our parliamentary system.

Why are we doing it? We're doing it, in part, to entrench the commitment. We're doing it, in part, because it has not always been the case that we have had a situation where we felt that the level of accountability by the executive council was reflected in their attendance in question period. So this way, we are setting a standard for this government and leading by example by ensuring that we attend question period at least two thirds of the time. The bill is obviously before the Legislature, but we have been ensuring even before the bill is passed—if it passes, after we consider debate in this House—that the Premier and cabinet ministers are here on a regular basis, and we are.

1540

This bill will confirm that this is the place in which elected MPPs hold the government and the executive council to account, not only here but before the cameras, so that people watching at home can get answers to questions about what the government of the day is doing. The bill will strengthen the foundations of the parliamentary system: ministers of the crown being answerable to the members of this House during question period and, through members, to the people.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): That's the way it's supposed to be.

Hon Mr Bryant: It is the way it's supposed to be, my great seatmate says. I guess this is self-evident. The only criticism I've heard about this bill so far is that it really shouldn't have to be necessary, and the reality is, I wish it weren't. There is not only an important principle but an opportunity here in that we're not only entrenching this requirement for attendance, we're also doing so

by way of statute in a way that is quintessentially Canadian.

It is not the case in all other Legislatures of the Commonwealth that members of cabinet or the Premier have to be in attendance to the extent to which we are here in Ontario. In the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister must be present for question period for 15 minutes, two times a week. For the other ministers, they answer questions by way of a roster. They're rostered, so though there may be an important issue of the day before the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, the shadow cabinet member is not able to stand up and ask a question to his or her counterpart about that particular issue. In fact, the way it works out is that a minister is up about once every 15 days to answer questions, whereas here in Ontario, and rightly so, in varying levels across Canada and also in the federal House of Commons, we have a requirement that the Premier and cabinet ministers are here in question period every day and we can be asked a question any day, and sometimes more than one, particularly if you're the Minister of the Environment, who tends to get a lot of questions, it seems.

Interjection: Good answers too.

Hon Mr Bryant: Excellent answers.

Also, in the United Kingdom, the minister gets a heads-up as to what the question is going to be. Written notice is provided to the minister, who gets a question every 15 days, as to when it's going to take place. That's not a criticism of that House, but that is their tradition.

Our tradition is that the Premier and cabinet regularly be here to answer questions, and this bill entrenches that very important Ontario convention and tradition in a way that will ensure that no matter what the rules of the House are, in the event that this bill passes, as long as it is the law of Ontario, that will be the requirement. It is not just a procedural matter, I would submit; I think it is also an important historical opportunity for us to say, "Here is how our Legislature works."

I hope we're all in agreement that we need to do everything we can to make this Legislature work better, to make our parliamentary system work better and to make our democratic system work better. A lot of parties will talk about that from time to time, but what we are doing with our democratic renewal agenda is actually implementing all of these reforms that many people, frankly, have been talking about for many years. So this bill is just part of our democratic renewal initiative. It is the most ambitious agenda for democratic renewal in the history of this province since Confederation.

Recently, the Premier and I announced an examination of our electoral system by a citizens' assembly. This citizens' assembly will be not unlike the citizens' assembly that was convened in the province of British Columbia, in that it will be a random selection of citizens undertaken by the chief electoral officer, who, after the random selection has been done, will then ask citizens whether or not they want to participate, and if they do, then they will. As was undertaken in British Columbia, we'll make sure that we have complete gender balance

and, of course, complete regional representation from across the province as well.

Never before has a government in Ontario given citizens such a direct role in shaping how our political process works. It is to say to the people, "You have inherited a certain electoral system," as the Premier often says. This is an opportunity for the people to say whether or not they think it works and whether or not we need changes to it. In the event that the citizens' assembly recommends that changes indeed need to be made, we will put that question to the people by way of a referendum.

We will also set up a citizens' jury to consider a new political finance regime that will ensure that people have confidence when it comes to the role of money and politics and the members of this Legislature. What better way to determine whether or not the people have confidence than to put it to the people by way of a citizens' jury? Again, that jury would be selected randomly. We would require the chief electoral officer's assistance in choosing potential candidates for the citizens' jury, and if they're willing to participate, then they will.

We're also seeking to involve young Ontarians by asking them to help us find new ways for all Ontarians to get involved in the democratic process. We're doing that specifically in a couple of ways. One is to say that we aren't going to have the youth engagement process alone and not do our best to try to ensure that we are involving young Ontarians in all our democratic renewal agendas. So there isn't the kids' democratic renewal process and then the grown-ups'; we want young Ontarians to be involved in both.

When it comes to engaging young Ontarians, instead of presuming that we know what the problems are and instead of presuming that we know what the prescriptions are, we are turning to young Ontarians, those who are already quite active with respect to youth engagement—people like Taylor Gunn, who has been running the Kids Voting operation that has been so hugely successful across the province, and many others. The goal, of course, is to get to some young people who heretofore had not been remotely interested in politics or government or Parliament or matters public. The goal is to get them more interested, more engaged and more involved, and we're doing it by going to them first. So they're going to be designing a process.

We launched this about two weeks ago. At the time, it was very well received by them, I think I can say accurately, in that we were asking them to design some initiatives and opportunities to improve youth engagement, to take steps toward democratic renewal by engaging them like never before.

Why are we doing this? I think everybody senses this significant malaise among the populace when it comes to confidence in matters political, legislative, parliamentary and governmental. The system of government that we have was established in 1867. Much of it remains to be commended, but it is one that is over a century old. We have not had a serious opportunity for citizens to have a

say as to whether or not this particular electoral system, this particular political finance system that we have, is one which they feel is accurately reflective, operational, functional and accountable for Ontarians.

Our democracy is rooted in the British parliamentary tradition. Certainly, it evolved over the centuries to its current form. It's a good system, it has served us well, and nobody is denying that. Today, Ontario is unparalleled in the strength of its democracy and the opportunities it offers, but there are obviously some disturbing signs as to the state of democracy as we know it.

1550

Our institutions were developed, one might say, for the industrial age, and we're now in the information age. Our institutions were developed for a different time and place, and we are seeing the effects. Now, some will say that in fact those institutions have in small and important ways undertaken reforms to reflect the needs of the day. Others would say that not enough has been done. Fundamental reforms have never truly been looked at.

One of the most disturbing signs of this malaise, of course, is voter turnout. Barely half of eligible voters participated in the last provincial election. The participation rate has steadily and rapidly declined in the past several elections. I think members of this House know this, particularly when you're knocking on doors when there isn't an election. Obviously, people become more engaged during an election, but in the early days of an election when people are figuring out when elections are—by the way, I'll have a word on that in a moment—and otherwise, when we canvass, as many of us do, in between elections, there's a really palpable sense. It's not unusual for the door to open and for somebody to say, "Oh, politics? You're a politician? Never mind." The door closes. Maybe that's just me in St Paul's. I think that's what the member opposite would like to say.

But I think we all know and feel, as we go door to door sometimes, and as we interact with members of the community, whether it be through a town hall meeting or otherwise, that many, many people are just tuned out of this business that we do, and yet it is such important business that we do. There is no doubt in my mind that, outside of the family, this is the most important secular institution in people's day-to-day lives.

We collect people's hard-earned taxes, and we spend their money. We spend their money on the most critical services that any secular institution outside of the family can provide to people: their health care, their education, the air that they breathe, the water they drink and the safety of their streets, to name only a few. That is the ascendancy of the importance of provincial government and provincial Legislatures, which were definitely, without a doubt, the farm team at the time of Confederation and which have now become a level of government, I think, that provides the most important services.

It is important for us to be relevant and engaged with the people of Ontario. This is even more true, I'd say, for young Ontarians. The statistics are dismal in terms of their voter turnout and, as a result of that, we have a

tautology of those not participating and feeling that they are not represented appropriately. We're going to change that.

I talked just a minute ago about elections, and in the early days of an election, we all get the same question: "Oh, was an election called?" Some people missed it, some people didn't, and when you're out there knocking on doors or, in my case, out there in front of subway stops, bus stops or at community events, sometimes they'll see me out there, and I'll say hi, and they'll say, "What, is there an election going on?" Why? They're cynical. They don't accept or appreciate or understand that there are many members in this House who are very active in between elections in trying to represent their communities.

On the election front, of course, we have introduced a bill that will fix the date of elections. As long as that is the law of Ontario, if the bill passes, that will fix elections on the first Thursday of October every four years, starting from the last election on the first Thursday of October about a year and a bit ago, so people will know when the elections are and so that the government of the day, the incumbent party, will not have that inherent advantage that every other previous incumbent government had.

So I believe that this is an important component of our democratic renewal agenda. There are many more components that I know other members may wish to speak of: new powers for the Provincial Auditor to go where the Provincial Auditor has never gone before; pre-election audits to ensure that people know from the auditor as to what the books are going into an election; the banning of partisan advertising so taxpayer dollars are not spent on one of the most cynical exercises that turn off voters and the citizens and residents of Ontario more than anything else; and a Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act that, for the first time, if now passed, will disclose the salaries of Hydro One and OPG employees.

I hope we're able to get support of all parties on this particular bill. It's up to those parties to express their concerns, wishes or thoughts about it. It is about entrenching an important principle and convention that we've long had and need to have in Ontario, and we want to make sure it is not observed in the breach in this province. I ask members for their support.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

In case you were curious about what the position of the Progressive Conservative Party might be with respect to Bill 17, probably the best word to describe our position might be, or our view, anyway, is bemusement. It is not surprising that the minister didn't deal at length with the legislation itself because really there's not much here. What is here, you don't know whether to laugh or cry with respect to this piece of legislation.

We talk about priorities of the government, the full agenda, and how they want to get on with the important business of the people, and they put legislation like this in front of us which is in effect, I think, an insult to the

intelligence of the Ontario electorate and certainly an insult to the members of the current executive council. They don't have enough confidence in their showing up in this place to represent their portfolio responsibilities if they have to introduce legislation to compel them and obligate them to do what they're being paid to do. That is passing strange, to say the very least.

We can look at a whole range of initiatives that this government has introduced where they're telling the public, the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario, that we have this enormous agenda that we have to get through, that we have to get through, and they bring in legislation like this, and they bring in legislation like bring-your-own-booze, they bring in legislation like pit bills, which addresses clearly, in that particular instance, a real concern of many people, but they do it in such a way that it lacks complete consultation with people who may have some intelligent observations to offer and would assist the government and members of this place in the drafting of comprehensive and effective legislation. No, they do the knee-jerk public relations thing, and the bring-your-own-booze was another example of that in this legislation, obligating the members of the executive council to appear in this House.

The minister suggests that that is part of this overall effort to bring democratic reform to Ontario. Of course, those of us who are here on a daily basis know that that doesn't stand up to scrutiny either. I was listening to the minister talking about, and I wrote down a couple of the things he said, "This is the place to hold the government to account, to get answers, the way it should be." I don't think that any of us would disagree with that, yet we're living the reality here on a day-to-day basis. In terms of trying to get answers to very serious questions and serious concerns of people in Ontario on a regular basis, we don't get that.

We asked specific questions, as an example today, related to a taxpayer-funded poll, which was what we call a poll to drive people's views with respect to negotiations with the Ontario Hospital Association. Specifically, I think we asked something like six individual questions on that poll: why it occurred, what was the intent, what was the cost etc. Not once were any of those direct questions answered in a direct way. The Premier took the opportunity to talk about issues that he wanted to talk about. Fair game, I guess; that's the way the place works. That's the reality of this place. That's one other element, I believe, when we talk about disillusionment among the electorate, when they tune this place in—question period. That's the part of this operation, I suspect, that gets the most attention from the viewing public, and they expect when questions are posed that answers will be delivered. That is consistently and regrettably not the case.

1600

When we talk about this whole issue of democratic reform in the broader context—I mentioned this in a private members' debate last week, I guess it was—this is the flavour of the day. We talk about proportional representation, and I'm certainly prepared to take a look

at that issue, but I think that when we look at disillusionment among the electorate, we should, as an assembly, be taking on the responsibility of exploring this issue, the broader issue of disillusionment—not the proportional representation issue, but disillusionment.

Why are fewer and fewer people participating in the democratic process? Why are we getting these declining turnouts at provincial, federal and municipal elections? I believe the dean of our caucus, the dean of the Legislature, Mr Sterling, has suggested an all-party select committee to take a look at this issue. Then we can determine where to go. What are the problems causing these folks to become disillusioned?

I've been around here going on 24 years and I suspect one of the reasons, which we've seen growing in this country over the past 30 or 40 years, is the increasing amount of influence, if you will, vested in the corner office, the Premier's office, in a group of unelected officials who surround the Premier of the day and have much greater influence on decisions affecting the impact on the province—

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Leslie Noble.

Mr Runciman: I'll say it has happened in all governments. I'm not being partisan about this. You want to interject in a partisan way? I'll come back at you in a partisan way. But I've been around here for Premiers of all provinces, of all political parties, and it happened with all of them. That's the reality and it's happening with you today. Unelected people around Premier McGuinty have more influence than you do as an elected official. It happened with Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and Bob Rae. It certainly happened with David Peterson. It happened, when I was first elected, with Premier Davis. That's the reality. That's the way this system is set up. To me, that has created growing disillusionment with the impact that all of us in this place can have on important issues facing us as legislators in Ontario.

You want to be political about it? You want to bury your head in the sand? Fine and dandy. But that's the reality. That's one of the root causes of disillusionment in this country, not just in the province of Ontario. We certainly see it at the federal level. We've seen it for years and years. If we don't come to grips with that, no matter what we do on the surface with proportional representation or initiatives in this place, we're not going to have the impact we hope to have. That's my view. Accept it, scoff at it, what you will, but that is my view. I would like to see us start to take a look at these kinds of meaningful issues.

I know this is a dynamite issue in many parts of the province, let alone the country, and it certainly, probably, would be in my part of the country, and that's this whole question of separation of the executive and legislative branches. Is that something we perhaps should be looking at in this country? Obviously it requires constitutional change, but I believe those are the kinds of big issues we should be taking on. We should be taking them on, playing a meaningful role in this place and taking a look at these kinds of significant issues as to how we can

really address disillusionment and the turning off of the electorate and the hard-working taxpayers, not only in Ontario but in Canada.

We can lead the way in this largest province in this great country by looking at these issues. If you want to do something that's dynamic, innovative and exciting, I suggest to the Attorney General, the minister responsible for democratic reform, that's perhaps the sort of thing we should be looking at as an assembly, and not looking at it in the partisan way in which we always tend to do, and we're all guilty of that.

I don't think our party is going to oppose this legislation. There's no point in opposing it. We don't see that it's going to perform any useful function. As I indicated earlier, I think that in some ways it's a slap in the face to the current occupants of chairs around the executive council table. But we won't prolong the debate any longer.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? I recognize the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Milloy: Thank you—

The Deputy Speaker: I'm open. I get a frown.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Milloy: It's a pleasure to participate in this debate on Bill 17 and follow the remarks of the gentleman from Leeds-Grenville and also the minister. I want to congratulate the minister on the bill. This is part of a series of pieces of legislation that he has brought forward.

The minister has referred to the contents of the bill. Essentially, it requires cabinet ministers to attend two thirds of all question periods, and there is a \$500 fine for those who can't attend, or who don't attend.

When you look at this bill, it deals with two things. First of all, it fulfills our commitment to do things differently. Second, as the member from Leeds-Grenville pointed out, it fights the cynicism that exists sometimes in Ontario when it comes to politics. A lot of people have asked themselves various questions about government. They see government as being outmoded and as not being reflective of the times.

I have spoken in this House before about how after the last election, when we had the incident with Mr Peters coming forward to show that the books of the province were not in the shape that had been proclaimed during the election by the government, individuals came to me and said, "Why can't we have a government that comes forward and asks the auditor to take a look at the books before the election and report on them just prior to the election?" There is no good answer to that, which is why we brought forward legislation, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, to do just that.

Others have asked me why the Provincial Auditor is limited in his or her powers. Right now, when it comes to those institutions which receive grants from the provincial government, if we're talking about universities, colleges, school boards and hospitals, which I think account for 60% of the government's expenditures, the

Provincial Auditor has no power, has no control to go out and deal with them. So people have said to me, "Why can't the Provincial Auditor go and do value-for-money audits? Why are we limited with so much of the money going out the door?" Yet again there is no good answer, which is why we brought forward changes to the Audit Act to create an Auditor General who can have that sort of power.

Then there is the issue of fixed election dates, which the Attorney General spoke about, the issue being that for year three, year two and 364 day onwards, governments come to a standstill. At that point, for the final year, the bureaucracy sits around waiting for that proper poll or that wonderful focus group which is going to call a government to move forward and actually call the election. Now we have a fixed election date: October 4, 2007. Mark it on your calendar, because that's the moment when we'll be going to the people and, I would argue, having an electoral system which is much more workable and which addresses some of these concerns.

We can talk about partisan advertising, a bill which is right now, I believe, being examined at one of the committees. Why for so many years have we seen governments send out glossy brochures telling everyone how much they are doing for health care or education? How many constituents have said to me, "Why don't you spend that money on health care or education instead of buying these glossy partisan brochures?"

It's all about taking a fresh approach. It's all about coming forward and doing things which make sense. It's unfortunate that the previous government has maligned the term "common sense" and made it into something that's partisan, because the fact is that we need more common sense in government. We need more people who will go forward and ask the types of questions that my constituents have asked, and, when there aren't good answers, move forward.

I think it makes sense that we have a system whereby cabinet ministers show up for work. If you were to ask the people of Kitchener Centre who go to work every day whether cabinet ministers should be in the Legislature to be accountable to the opposition, to be accountable to the people of Ontario, I think they would agree that that's a good thing. They would see that imposing a fine means we finally have teeth, that we are telling the people of Ontario that we take the job of governing seriously, that we want to bring forward the types of democratic changes needed to make sure we are a government that is reflective of the times, a government that's moving forward.

That's why I welcome Bill 17 and I'm pleased to stand and support the minister. Yet again we're coming forward with something that we promised in the election and delivering on it.

1610

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm at last pleased to be able to take part in this debate. Let me say I want to make a few brief comments, because I

know there are important matters to deal with out there. There are really important matters to be dealt with in Ontario.

The part of Ontario that I'm from has lost 6,000 jobs in the last year, and they're going to lose more. The Association of Major Power Consumers says that if the McGuinty government goes down the road of their electricity privatization plan, it will close more paper mills, more pulp mills, more mining operations, more smelting operations and more steel mills. We should be dealing with that.

I know, for example, that there are lots of autistic children in Ontario who were promised by the Premier in the last election that they would have access to what is called IBI treatment. I'd like to be dealing with that issue.

There are important issues in terms of college and university students who can't afford to pay their tuition fees, who are going increasingly into debt, many of whom are saying, "I can't afford to go to college or university. Even though I want to go and I'm qualified to go, I don't have the money." I'd like to be dealing with that issue, because those are really important issues.

Then there's the issue of parents who are forced to rely upon social assistance, who have watched the cost of living go up by some 35% over the last 10 years. They can't pay the rent. It's hard to put food on the table; it's hard to provide clothing for their children. I know the Premier promised he was going to end the clawback of the national child benefit so that these parents would have enough money to put food on the table, to pay the rent and to send their children to school with a lunch and perhaps some new clothes. I'd like to be dealing with that issue, because those are real people, real lives, people who are being hurt and in some cases in ways that will affect them for a lifetime.

I just read the Provincial Auditor's report. Despite the fact that the Walkerton tragedy happened four years ago, that seven people died as a result of the tainted water and thousands remain ill—illnesses that will last for the rest of their lives—the Provincial Auditor tells us that the province of Ontario is no further ahead today in terms of protecting safe drinking water or protecting the quality of water than we were. I'd like to be dealing with that issue, because people's lives are involved and we could do something about that.

Similarly with air quality, the Provincial Auditor says that the air quality index this government uses is useless. It's out of date. It doesn't provide people with accurate information. We know from the Ontario Medical Association that people are dying in this province from bad air and other people are being afflicted such that they will have lifelong illnesses as a result of bad air. I'd like to be dealing with that, because that's important. That matters to people. People's lives and people's health are at stake. I think it's important that we deal with that.

There are several other issues: Municipalities: Every municipality I've spoken to in the last year—they've all got the same plea. After all of the downloading of responsibilities that happened—seniors' housing, social

housing, child care, land ambulance, fire, water, policing—after the downloading of all the costs and responsibilities of all those important services, they still have only one main source of revenue: the property tax. Many municipalities don't know how they're going to do it and, frankly, I don't know either. That's important. We should be dealing with that issue. That's what we should be addressing here: important issues that affect people's lives.

But do you know what, Speaker? We don't get to deal with those. Do you know why? Because we have to debate a bill that even the minister who is responsible for it didn't want to talk about today. Do you know why? Because he's embarrassed by it. It's embarrassing. It is frankly an affront to this Legislature to even be talking about this piece of nonsense. That's what it is. It's rubbish. The time of the Legislature shouldn't be taken up with this, but you know what? This is a priority of the McGuinty government.

Let me tell you what's in Bill 17 and how absurd, how ridiculous, how wasteful of our time it is. The bill amends the Executive Council Act to provide a purely nominal requirement that "ministers must attend question period on at least two-thirds of the days on which the House holds routine proceedings." That sounds good. That sounds like cabinet ministers will have to attend question period. But then you read the fine print, and it says they can be absent and if the Premier excuses them, it doesn't matter. I say, what's changed? Without this bill the Premier can say to his cabinet ministers, "You be in question period, and you answer the questions," and he can tell them, "If you're not in question period, you won't be a cabinet minister any more." The Premier could do that today; so what comes with this bill? Nothing. This is a waste of legislators' time, it is a waste of taxpayers' money, and it is a waste, frankly, of the time of the citizens and voters of Ontario.

Let me read some of the other fine print, because it gets more ridiculous: "At the end of every session ... a status report showing each minister's attendance at question period" will be prepared by the Premier's office. But what difference does it make? The Premier can simply say, "I excuse you. I excuse you." So it makes no difference whatsoever. Again, it's complete nonsense. Then it says that the Premier assesses "a penalty of \$500 for each day of non-attendance." You know what? The Premier could do that now. The Premier could say, "You weren't in question period 20% of the time. Give back 20% of your pay or you're out of cabinet."

What does this bill do? Nothing, absolutely nothing. That's why the minister didn't want to debate it. That's why he was too embarrassed to mention this bill. That's why he talked about everything other than this bill, because it is so ridiculous, it is so stupid, it is such a waste of legislators' time. I want to on, because you know what? The more you read about this, the more ridiculous and absurd it becomes.

There is a history to this, a great irony to this, as a matter of fact. On April 26, 2001, George Smitherman—

we know him now as furious George, who goes around the province attacking the doctors, attacking the hospitals, attacking the lowest-paid workers in the hospitals, telling the nurse practitioners to buzz off. That's how we know him now. But George Smitherman, then, thought that he had another brilliant attack strategy. He was going to attack, so he brought in a private member's bill that said that cabinet ministers would lose \$100 of their pay if they missed 60% of the question periods.

All right. He thought this was a way that was going to embarrass somebody. But do you know who got embarrassed? Ironically, it was the then leader of the official opposition, Dalton McGuinty, because in the next session of the Legislature he skipped 21 out of 31 question periods. He was missing two thirds of the time.

The Deputy Speaker: The member knows that you shouldn't refer specifically to other members' absences, and I would ask that you take that into consideration.

Mr Hampton: I apologize, Speaker, and I take that back, but it is difficult to discuss this bill without talking about what really went on and how absurd it is. But I'll take that back.

Anyway, it's just to say that as a result of this private member's bill, some members of the official opposition got caught in their own trap and were embarrassed by it, and they should have been embarrassed by it. In fact, I think this private member's bill should have been ruled out of order when an attempt was made to introduce it, because if I can't refer to a member's presence or absence here directly, someone shouldn't be able to refer to it indirectly. But that's water under the bridge. Now Liberals will get to live in the bed that they made, and that's what's happening here.

1620

So here's where we are: That's what led to the introduction of this silly, absurd, bizarre, ridiculous and nonsensical piece of legislation. But do you know what? When you further read the fine print, it gets even sillier. Read some of the actual sections. The essence of it is that the Premier polices his cabinet. Well, that's the way it is now, without this bill. The Premier can tomorrow say, "Rick Bartolucci, you're gone from cabinet." He can say to the Minister of Health, "You're gone from cabinet."

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You can grieve.

Mr Hampton: "You can grieve," says one of the aspiring cabinet ministers.

Mr Patten: No, I was there. I've had it.

Mr Hampton: When you heckle, you get some retort.

Anyway, this bill doesn't change anything, it doesn't do anything, it doesn't add anything. It's a complete waste of our time, but it's a government priority that we debate this nonsense.

I want to refer to subsection 7(2) of the bill. It states that "if the Premier is of the opinion that the absence is justified because of illness, bereavement, a religious holiday or some similar reason," then the absence doesn't count. The Premier can do that now. He doesn't need this ridiculous bill.

Let me read subsection 7(3), which states, "A day on which a minister is absent from the chamber during part but not all of the period set aside for oral questions is not counted as an absence for the purpose of this section if the Premier is of the opinion that the absence is permissible." What's changed? The Premier can do that now. He doesn't need to be tying up precious legislative time for this nonsense. So on it goes. There are more and more exceptions.

I listened carefully to the minister's speech, because I wanted to see if he'd actually mention this bill. He was too embarrassed to mention it. But do you know what? He started talking about voters becoming cynical. Let me tell you what makes voters cynical. When people learn about this kind of nonsense, that governments are wasting their time on this kind of nonsense, this kind of absurdity, this kind of silliness, it leads people to be cynical. People say, "I can't believe this. Why would any serious person spend their time on this kind of nonsense?"

Let me tell you something else that makes voters and citizens generally cynical. What makes them very cynical is when a Premier, then Leader of the Opposition, rhymes off promise after promise after promise after promise. I can't count them any more. Somebody said that there were 231; other people say, if you read the fine print, it works out to something like 331. What makes people cynical is when someone like the Premier promises the sun, the moon and the stars while he's out there trolling for votes and then, the day after the election, tries to pretend that he didn't make any of those promises or that if he did make those promises they don't count any more, they don't matter. That's what makes people cynical. That's what turns people off. That's what leads people to say, "What's the use? Why should I bother to vote, when the day after the election he or she is simply going to say, 'Oh, that was then. I'm elected now. I can just ignore all those promises?'" That's what makes people cynical.

I'll give you some further examples, because the minister referred to this. I remember when Premier Dalton McGuinty was on this side of the Legislature. On the issue of doctors and the health care community, for example, he used to thunder and roar at the former government, saying they were attacking public servants, they were attacking nurses, they were attacking doctors, and they were demeaning and vilifying and undermining dedicated health care providers. He used to say that, and he used to vilify the former government.

I look at what's gone on with the current Minister of Health and the current Premier, in terms of going out there and trying to undermine hospital administrators and volunteer hospital boards, suggesting, as the Minister of Health did, that the way you find money in the health care system is to attack the lowest-paid workers in the hospital system—the cleaners. That's how you're going to save lots of money.

As we saw earlier this week—and I just saw another letter from physicians today. To do what the Minister of Health and the Premier did last Friday—to literally

connive a situation where they attacked the physicians of the province, where they vilified the physicians of the province, where they used what can only be described as cynical push-polling to try to undermine the physicians of the province.

I saw a blistering letter today from a group that formerly supported the government's position, in terms of the doctors' agreement going forward, saying that the tactics—and they list them: the cheap politics, the vilifying of physicians, the humiliation of physicians—are going to do great damage, that the very agenda in terms of primary health care reform that the government wants to move forward on may, and in fact likely will, be undermined by the government's underhanded tactics.

Let me tell you, that creates cynicism. That creates an attitude among voters where they say, "Thirteen months ago, he said he would never do that. Thirteen months ago, he used to criticize the former government for doing that. Now he's doing worse." That creates cynicism.

Let me tell all members that it will make all our jobs that much more difficult. It will make our work in here that much more difficult, it will make our work out there on doorsteps that much more difficult and it will make governance of the province that much more difficult. Despite whatever partisan hide you may lose in this exercise that you put together last Friday, it will hurt all of us.

Do you what I'd like the minister responsible for democratic renewal to do? Please withdraw this bill that you wouldn't even speak to in your own speech, that you took great pains to avoid referring to in your own speech. Have the decency to withdraw it. Recognize that it was a bad idea, that it's more of the cheap politics that the physicians are now so angry with you about. In fact, this very bill undermines this place, undervalues this place, demeans the work we all do. Have the decency to recognize that and withdraw this piece of nonsense, because you know and I know it is nothing but a piece of cheap propaganda designed to get a one-day or two-day headline, but it is not productive in terms of this Legislature, it's not helpful in terms of the work legislators do here and frankly it's completely out of place.

So I say to the minister, the proper thing to do, the right thing to do, if you're truly interested in democratic renewal, would be to withdraw this legislation, because it is silly, it is bizarre, it is absurd and it accomplishes nothing that the Premier couldn't do already by exercising his authority as the Premier of the province.

I could have lots more to say, because there is lots more to say about the issues that aren't being dealt with that should be dealt with here, that urgently need to be debated here. That's what we should be doing. That's why I'm not going to spend any more time on this bill. Withdraw it, get it out of here and let's deal with the issues that really matter to the people of Ontario.

1630

Mr Sterling: I associate myself with many of the remarks the leader of the third party put forward. This, in fact, is one of the silliest bills I have seen in this Legis-

lature. But there is some damaging effect to this bill. Not only is it wasting the time of the Legislature, but it also demeans the character of our cabinet ministers. I don't believe that cabinet ministers should be subject to a school-like attendance report. I don't believe that some of the most respected—or they should be the most respected—people in our province should be subject to this kind of thing.

We've heard so much about the power of the centre, the power of the Premier, and the Premier does have unbelievable power under our system. When he was in opposition, and during the campaign, we heard the Premier talk about giving the individual MPPs more latitude, more freedom, to do what they should or shouldn't do in this place. As I've mentioned before, we've not yet seen any MPP from the back of the Liberal benches vote against any one of the 40-plus bills. So we haven't seen a dissemination of the powers from the Premier out to the members; it has actually been the other way.

It's odd, too, that we're giving an afternoon of debate to this particular piece of legislation, which is actually nothing, and we're not having one minute of debate on what the citizens' committee is going to do. That has been a fiat of this government. This government has said, "We, the Liberal government of Ontario, the Liberal Party of Ontario, are going to make the decision as to how this citizens' committee is going to be set up and what their mandate is going to be." I presume they're going to tell them what the reporting mechanism is going to be etc.

It's amazing that a phony attendance record kept by the Premier of Ontario about his cabinet ministers is more important than consideration of proportional representation in this province.

We've had two other pieces of democratic reform legislation as well. One has been the fixed election date, which has been acknowledged by the media as nothing more than a mere promise by Dalton McGuinty to hold an election on October 4, 2007, as he has the power to walk down the hall to the Lieutenant Governor's office at any moment between now and five years, I guess, to October 2, 2008, and call the election. So that particular bill amounts to a promise by Dalton McGuinty to hold an election on that particular date. That's part of the other leg of democratic reform.

The other one relates to this pre-election audit. In our parliamentary system, an election can happen by the Premier walking down the hall and calling an election when he would like it, or after a vote in this House, in terms of a non-confidence vote passing, although that's very unlikely with this government. If that did happen, of course, there wouldn't be time for this audit. Within that bill, there are also all kinds of opportunities for the government to just bow out and say, "We're not going to do it."

So we have three useless pieces of election-like democratic reforms, so that they can hold out to the public that in fact something is happening.

The last one, proportional representation, does mean something. It is an important electoral reform. Because our institution at Queen's Park has been here for 137 years, I don't think any member of this Legislature thinks that we should go ahead with this kind of reform lightly or necessarily quickly if it's going to have a tremendous effect on what happens here.

My concern with this particular path the government has set out has been that they haven't really sat down with members of the Legislature, many, many of whom have a lot of experience. I have a lot of experience, Mr Speaker, as you know. I've been here since 1977 and have served as government House leader, and as a cabinet minister in Mr Davis's government. I've been a cabinet minister in Mr Harris's government and Mr Eves's government, I've been in opposition on a couple of occasions, and I've been in two minority Parliaments etc.

I think the prudent approach would be for the government to sit down and say, "Let's have a talk about this, maybe not only with our present members, but let's get in some of the people who were representatives and sat as MPPs in this place. Let's talk to them about what should be involved in, perhaps, this voting reform, what should happen in this place, how we can actually make this place more functional." Because it has become dysfunctional, particularly over the time since we allowed TV cameras into this place.

There was a marked difference when TV cameras came into the Legislative Assembly. Unfortunately, even though we were warned by our federal counterparts that it wasn't a very smart thing to do, we did it. It's very difficult to argue that you shouldn't have TV cameras in your Legislature and that the public shouldn't see what you're doing and all the rest of it, so there's no retreating on it. But there's no question that when that happened in 1987 or 1988, there was a significant change in the behaviour of the members of this Legislature, and a very much more partisan edge took place in terms of the debate etc.

We really do have problems here. We have power that is overwhelmingly concentrated at the centre. We have a lack of independence in terms of members of this Legislature. We really have no independent accountability for the decisions we make. When you're sitting as a backbencher, as an MPP for the government, all you do is say, "How did you vote on this particular matter?" "I'm a member of the government. This was a government bill. I supported it." End of story.

Therefore, members of the government don't feel—and this is true for members on the other side. In the eight elections I participated in, of course I wouldn't have been asked this in the first election, but in the subsequent seven elections I don't think I was ever asked, "Why did you vote yea or nay on a particular piece of legislation?" I don't think I was ever asked the question. That's because the people of Ontario have become accustomed to the argument that you vote with the government, or you vote with your party. There's no individual independence or freedom to do what you think should be

done for your constituents, and that is reflected in the debate in this place.

The debate in this place is abysmal at times. It's usually partisan. It usually has little to do with the piece of legislation in front of us. Therefore, it's very difficult to sit in this place and listen to it on a long-term basis. I often have one ear cocked for a good speaker in this Legislature, which unfortunately comes too seldom, but I often bring reading material and read while I'm in this Legislature, or try to do some other work.

In my view, being in this place for 27 years, and as I say, being the government House leader and having actually instituted some fairly significant reforms, or the most significant reforms in this place that have had some positive effect on individual members—it was at my initiation that the committee bill was initiated. I copied the Saskatchewan Legislature in bringing forward the opportunity for the government House leader to put a bill out after first reading, which has been done successfully, I think, by our government—I don't know whether this government has put one out after first reading—with regard to getting a more co-operative effort by members of the committee, to not feel that they were cornered on a vote and had to take a position on second reading debate before they got out to committee and really found out what the matter was about. You can do that with certain kinds of issues.

1640

During my parliamentary career, I have tried to make this place work a little bit in the positions that I've held, either in opposition as a House leader or deputy House leader or as the government House leader, which I was for three years from 1997 to 1999.

One of the problems that we have in this Legislature, and one of the things that I think we should really address if we want to change this place around, is that we've got to talk about the financial authority not only resting in the hands of the cabinet. I can never forget Bob Nixon, who was a former leader of the Liberal Party, saying to me, when we were in opposition in 1987 or 1988, "Norm, you don't have any role in legislating. You're in opposition. Norm, you have one job, and that job is to embarrass us." That's what Bob Nixon told me in 1987 or 1988, and he's right. We really have one job here, and that's not to be constructive. That is, in fact, the way the system plays out.

I think that's wrong. I have been constructive in opposition. I forced the government to bring forward the first piece of legislation controlling smoking in the workplace. I started in 1985, hammered forward with seven private member's bills, from 1985 to 1989, and asked embarrassing questions in this Legislature about smoking policies in the government.

Mr Hampton: He wouldn't go home at night.

Mr Sterling: I did not give up. I really, truly believed I had a goal in that.

I also had a constructive role in opposition with the NDP government, in 1991 and 1992, with regard to enduring powers of attorney and the Mental Health Act. I

worked very constructively with them. Those two issues are good examples of where you can do something, but it's not happening now. It hasn't happened for the last 10 or 15 years.

One of the problems we have here is that as we go out and try to reform this place, we should really not look at proportional representation in isolation, because there can be many forms of proportional representation. New Zealand has a system where they have 46% of their Parliament elected by proportional representation and 56% by first past the post. Members there will tell you that they want to keep it, but they will also tell you that some of the people who are appointed through the proportional representation system are lazy, unaccountable and don't do their work etc, and those who represent a constituency geographically are very upset with their colleagues in that particular system.

We really have to understand what the dynamics of this question are and what the outcome could be. If it was all proportional representation or maybe one or two or three of the different kinds of models, we'd effectively be putting this place in a perpetual minority government situation. Before you ask people if they want proportional representation, people should understand that that's the likely outcome and that it will be very, very difficult for governments in the future to make difficult decisions—decisions in not necessarily good economic times when you're collecting lots of tax revenue. As they found in Germany, proportional representation is great in the good times, but in the bad times, when the government has to buckle down and say no to some particular wants and needs, it's not being viewed as that great.

My concern about this is that I really view this place, the institution, in about three different categories, and the way you elect people to get here is probably about third on the totem pole in terms of what is important. The first and most important part is whether we want to restructure this particular place. Would it be wiser for us to look at the system that is south of our border in terms of saying the legislative branch has some of the financial power and shares that with the Premier or the governor, and the civil service or the bureaucrats or the implementers have to come to the Legislative Assembly, or the Senate or whatever you have, and prove their case and bring it forward?

That would be a much greater change to our system and would require constitutional change, but we should think about those things if we are going to really change how this place lives and works.

I've seen, as I say, governments from all different sides, and I don't see it as just a problem that's located in this legislative chamber or among politicians. I see it very much in terms of the relationship between the 80,000-some people who work directly for us and the I don't know how many thousands who work indirectly for us. I don't believe there is a good accountability mechanism between those people who work for us and the cabinet, as it stands. And I'm not saying this government, I'm saying all governments, because, as a cabinet minis-

ter, you walk into a post—and I've been a cabinet minister in nine different portfolios. It's very difficult to get your hands on what is happening around you and what the accountability mechanisms to you are when you have very large responsibilities.

I really don't think, as our government has become more complicated, as the issues we're responsible for as a provincial government have become very large, that the system we have in terms of accountability between the legislative branch and the bureaucracy or the civil service or the providers of those services is working at the present time. I don't think it really can, quite frankly, and therefore I think we need to look deeper into this.

That's why I guess I was a little bit upset when the Attorney General and the Premier stood up and said, "We are going to start off on this path with regard to how we're going to elect people over here." We're basically going to do this without consulting or even having a debate in this Legislature about how we should put this out so that the public will understand what the options are, what the likely outcome of choosing any one of those options will be, what the future government will likely be and what will be the disadvantages of it.

The only good part about this bill is that it's given me an opportunity to speak about other democratic reform ideas, particularly the proportional representation issue, which I guess we're going to put out to an unelected citizens' committee without any kind of formal debate in this place with regard to that move.

It's so odd that we have this bill dealing with attendance of cabinet ministers in this place and we're not going to have a piece of legislation to set up the citizens' committee; we're not going to have a resolution in this place, as far as I know, or a debate to set that up.

I just want to thank members of the Legislature who have listened to a little of my bantering about perhaps a route we should take. I will have a very difficult time either voting for or against this bill, because I don't really think it needs to be embodied in legislation.

1650

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I take great pleasure in having the opportunity to debate Bill 17. I apologize for my delay. I was in another meeting and have been running around, like we always do in this lovely place.

I had an opportunity very briefly to hear some of the comments that were made by my leader, Howard Hampton, the member for Kenora-Rainy River, and I understand that the issue is not so much with the bill itself, but rather with the things that are missing from the bill, particularly around—my understanding, anyway—the process by which the alleged—what would you call it?—atonement for absences gets dealt with in the case of this bill.

My understanding, notwithstanding the fact that my leader had to leave to go into the lounge to have an interview with my local newspaper, the Spectator, is that the bill puts the situation in the hands of the Premier to determine whether the minister in question had a good excuse or a bad excuse.

Although the bill purports to bring accountability—I think that's what the minister mentioned when he introduced it—the accountability still is very minimal, because it only goes to the decision of the Premier to determine whether there has been a justified absence.

I guess the issue is that if the Premier is in a position not to feel like punishing any of his ministers on that particular day, then he can decide not to do so. If, on the other hand, he is not in that type of mood and is in a different type of mood, then the punishment will be meted out. The issue then becomes, where is the real accountability? If you're going to put a bill in place that's going to have some accountability, you really need to look at some of the specifics around what exactly is going to be a "get out of jail free." I don't think that's covered in the bill.

Subsection 7(2) states that "if the Premier is of the opinion that the absence is justified because of illness, bereavement, a religious holiday or some similar reason," then the absence pretty much doesn't count. So you see again that it's a matter of opinion, a matter of judgment. It's not really a hard-and-fast rule, which is how it's being presented by the government in terms of what this bill is supposed to be doing.

Subsection 7(3) states, "A day on which a minister is absent from the chamber during part but not all of the period set aside for oral questions is not counted as an absence for the purpose of this section if the Premier is of the opinion that the absence is permissible."

There again, it's being touted as the bill that keeps ministers accountable by making sure they spend more time in the Legislature during question period. It's saying, "Here is what it's supposed to be doing," but when you look at the language of the bill, it really talks about whether the Premier's opinion will come into force: Does the Premier think it's going to be an absence? Does he think it's justifiable? That's how we determine whether people will be held to account.

I think that, as to the title and intent of the bill, as stated, people would say, "Of course, that makes sense. Everybody wants more accountability. Everybody wants the government to be accountable and the ministers to be there when important questions are being brought during question period." However, the problem is that's not what we see to any great extent in this bill. We just see a great deal of opportunity for opinion and for the Premier to judge every instance separately, which is not the same as having a set of rules or a set of hard-and-fast guidelines or a framework that needs to be dealt with in each and every case.

When you look at that, you think, "OK, here's what the government is promising to do in regard to this particular bill." When you then see what is actually in there, you realize that that promise does not really come through in the bill itself, so you begin to wonder if this bill is not just another broken promise.

As you know, the previous speaker from our party, my leader, spent some time talking about that, and of course we dealt with those issues again in question period today,

as we've unfortunately been forced to do every day since I've been in this esteemed chamber. That's pretty frustrating for the people of Ontario, and it doesn't help when the government brings bills forward that, first of all, have nothing to do with their platform and, second, don't even fulfill the promise that's stated at the front of the bill as it's being touted by the government.

What I'm hearing is that people want to see transparency in government, yes; they want to see accountability in government, yes. But that doesn't mean bills like Bill 17. It means things like keeping promises around everything from hydro rates cap to auto insurance rates, P3 hospitals, the Oak Ridges moraine, environmental issues, education funding, all kinds of—I mean, we could just go on and on, right? I have the list in front of me, and I don't think I need to go on to any great extent. You have people, on one hand, seeing government talking about wanting to make things better in Ontario, that people in Ontario did the right thing by choosing change and putting the Liberals into government, and what they're seeing are bills that say one thing and do another, which is reminiscent of the previous government, I have to say.

They're also backtracking and backpedalling not only on their promises but on the things they happen to get caught promising during question period, for example. We saw that today with the film tax credit. It was very interesting to see that. Now we're hearing, today particularly, from the government that's made so many promises, "Well, we did make that promise. We are going to make good on it, but maybe in 2007 or maybe in 2008." Certainly I don't think that's the time frame that the voters of Ontario, anyway, were very clear about. I'm quite sure the voters of Ontario thought they would get some change when they elected the Liberal government and didn't expect to have to wait year after year after year before those changes came into force.

Whether it's the delisting of health care services, whether it's the 407 tolls that haven't been rolled back, whether it's scandalous issues like the tainted meat inquiry and other issues of that nature, I have to tell you that the bottom line is, broken promises are the theme of the government. The one promise of transparency and accountability that they have a real opportunity to see fulfilled right now with a bill addressing that issue is not going to be fulfilled. It's not going to be fulfilled because the bill really falls short of putting real, measurable accountability requirements on the honourable ministers across the chamber here.

It's really unfortunate. Once again, I think it's not dissimilar to lots of other legislation that's come forward and many more efforts that have come forward from the government. People's hopes get built up. People get excited, or at least get some sense of forward movement and support. They think, "Wow, the government's going to do something about this," and then those hopes are dashed when they read the fine print, when they actually take the time to look at the details and determine that it was really just a public relations exercise; it was just an

opportunity to get something out there that the government could spin to make it look like they're responding to the fast-diving confidence that people have in the government. People are saying, "We don't trust you. You're breaking your promises. We don't like the way you're governing. You're not doing the things you said you were going to do, and you're doing all kinds of things that you never told us you were going to do." So the government comes out with Bill 17 as a way to try to perhaps restore faith with the public.

1700

I've got to tell you, it's going to take more than Bill 17 on cabinet attendance to restore the faith of the public, particularly when the public finds out that it's not really very effective. It's not a real opportunity to hold the ministers to account; it's a matter of giving the government a way to tout this bill as the answer to accountability in the chamber.

It's going to be another frustration. It's going to be another letdown. It'll be interesting to watch the spin doctors from the government side-spin this into a good-news story, how it's somehow going to be the panacea for the situation we've faced many times when ministers are not able to be here.

Everyone knows and everyone would agree that real life takes over, and that, regardless of the very busy, very hectic and very high-demand role we play as members of provincial Parliament, we do have real lives too, and sometimes things happen and sometimes events occur that we simply cannot avoid. Again, ministers are human beings, and they too are going to have situations that they can't avoid and that in fact they should be attending to in their personal lives.

I would be the last person to say that people shouldn't attend to issues in their personal lives that are of extremely high importance. It keeps you human. It keeps you in touch with what the real things are in life and what the real people whom we purport to represent every day are feeling and are dealing with every day in their real lives. So I don't take issue with that at all, but what I do take issue with is the fact that this bill doesn't really provide an opportunity to ensure that that accountability is there in an effective way.

It's a little bit frustrating to have this bill in front of us, knowing that it's going to be touted as one thing and understanding through reviewing it that it's going to do something quite different. Giving the Premier the final rubber stamp, yea or nay—"Yes, this person was allowed to not be there"; "No, that person should have been there"—is really not appropriate at all. It's tantamount to asking Al Capone to keep an eye on Mob activity, and that's certainly something that we know is not appropriate to do. In fact, it's like that old adage—the fox looking after the henhouse or something like that. Not to say that anybody is one of those particular characters specifically, but just the model around which we have the accountability built in, the last person to make a decision on this being the Premier—I don't think it's going to be effective. In fact, I'm sure it's not going to be very effective at all, and it's unfortunate.

I think the government had better watch themselves, because there's a very large risk that the public is going to see that the emperor has no clothes when it comes to this bill, and that what they are claiming to be doing in this bill is going to turn around and bite them. When it becomes very clear that this is really a nothing bill and that this bill has very little opportunity to keep ministers accountable in the question period process, people aren't going to be happy about that. They're going to be seeing a situation where they were sold a bill of goods.

From my perspective—and that's just me on this side of the room—the public is fed up with that kind of stuff. The public has had enough of that kind of thing. They've had enough of the government selling them one bill of goods and then opening the package and, holy smokes, it's something else altogether. Whether that's a broken promise or whether that's something that was not on the agenda of the government in their election platform and is being implemented now, like the delisting of chiropractic, physiotherapy and vision care, or whether it's this bill itself, Bill 17, on cabinet attendance, the public are tired of the inconsiderate tone the government has when dealing with the public.

If this is just out there as a way to try to spin some kind of major government activity on accountability, then you had better watch because the spin might come back and hit you where you're not expecting it. You know what? This public, our public, our residents of Ontario, are quite capable of seeing through this kind of stuff. They're going to have some things to say, I'm sure. I tend to hear from people in my riding when they are wondering, "I saw you talking on TV that day. You were talking about this particular thing. What was that all about?" When you take the time to explain it to them, some of them laugh, others shake their heads and others get angry. That's the kind of response I'm hearing from people who elected me. I wouldn't be surprised if some of you over on that side are hearing it too. So you have to be careful about these bills that you decide to kind of put out in an attempt to spin them whatever way you want.

Nonetheless, I know there's been much discussion about the bill already. I don't have it in front of me, but I see it over here. I have looked at it by myself. It's only, I think, two pages, so there is not a lot of content, as people would know. I wish I had it in front of me. I would hold it up. I'm not allowed any other props, but I am allowed to hold up bills, right, Mr Speaker? Unfortunately, I don't have it right in front of me at this time, so I can't do that. I would like to actually quote a few things from it, but that's OK.

I think I've pretty much exhausted my points. I could go on and on and list all the different broken promises, all the disappointments, all the letdowns, all the put-offs, the latest tactic of the government, which is to say, "Oh, we're going to put that off, and yes, we are going to keep that promise, we're just not going to keep it any time soon. We'll probably keep it eight months or two years from now, who knows?"

I guess that's another bill or another piece of fodder for that fray. I think it belongs with all those other dis-

appointments the people of Ontario have had to endure in these last 14 months, and unfortunately, it looks like they're going to have to endure for the next I don't know how many months until the government figures out that they need to do something substantive and not just try to spin the public into thinking they're doing things around accountability with their ministers.

That concludes my remarks.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I'm honoured to stand tonight and speak in support of this bill. I had the chance to listen this afternoon to many speakers who spoke about this bill. Some of them were supporting it and some of them were negative about it, which is normal in this House.

First, I want to congratulate the minister for making this bill see life and the light in order to proceed with our democratic renewal journey.

I listened first to the interim leader of the opposition party, and second to the leader of the third party, and I heard nothing but negativity about this bill and about the approach of our government. I have been puzzled since I have been here, since October, as a newly elected person to this House. At home I used to watch the debate on TV. I used to listen to the opposition. I used to listen to many different parties talking. I thought that when they debated, they brought up important issues concerning the people. Now I learn that the opposition's only job is to be negative, to be destructive regarding the government's journey.

I was listening to the Attorney General, the minister who brought in this bill, when he was talking about the intent of the bill. The bill, of course, seeks democratic engagement for all the people in this House and also speaks about the attendance of the ministers in this place. I was listening earlier to the minister when he introduced this bill. It's funny when we have to speak and have to have a bill, when we have to talk about this issue. We wouldn't have to if we didn't have past experience. In the past government, during Mike Harris's time, only 50% of the cabinet ministers attended question period, and 18% in the Eves government attended question period.

It's very important to all the people, to the opposition, to every member, to have the ministers in attendance, to ask questions and to get exactly the right answer directly from the person who is in charge of the portfolio. We didn't have to make it in the form of a bill. We didn't have to bring this bill forward if we also didn't have a bad experience in the past.

1710

We never had a bill saying the budget should be announced in this place. Traditionally, all past governments introduced the budget from this place. The past government broke all the traditions and they announced it from a private place. I believe this bill is very important to eliminate all the confusion and to put everything in place.

I again congratulate the minister for working hard to make sure all our procedures, all our activities in this place, are democratically done, and for trying to engage

all the people of this province in democratic elections. That's why he spoke earlier about finding a mechanism to engage all the people to choose us in this place, to choose the MPPs, to choose the government they like. He's trying to study all the right approaches.

It was interesting when I was listening to him talking about how other countries work and the attendance of the Premier or cabinet ministers. I was listening to him when he brought that example from England, the UK. I was surprised when he said ministers don't have to attend in the House of Commons and the questions are submitted to the minister in charge of any portfolio 15 days in advance, which takes all the effect and all the honesty from the questions, I believe.

As a matter of fact, the government's approach is very important, to have a democratic way in which the opposition or the government side can stand up and directly ask the minister and directly get the answer. We saw it today. Without any preparation, most of our ministers, all of those who had been asked a question today, answered the questions. Despite what the opposition is saying because they don't like the answer, they had a good answer right away, because the ministers know their jobs very well and they are working passionately in this place to make sure all ministries and all the staff have been prepared in their engagement with the people. That's why I think it's an important bill, and I hope at the end of the day we can see more coming forward in order to ensure democracy.

Hopefully the third party leader can hear me right now. We are confused in this place. I'm a little confused,

because if we talk about implementing our promises, they say it's silly. If we say we're not going to do it, they say, "You're breaking your promise." From now on, I believe we have to proceed, we have to go forward, because we believe we are on the right track. We are going to keep going on the right track, and I will support the government and the minister on this bill. Hopefully all of us will support it and let it go.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bryant has moved second reading of Bill 17. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on the motion by Mr Bryant for second reading of Bill 17 be deferred until routine proceedings on December 2. It's been signed by the chief government whip.

Orders of the day.

Hon Mr Bartolucci: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion of adjournment.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Bartolucci has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until Thursday morning, December 2, at 10 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1715.

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Jeudi 2 décembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 décembre 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I move that, in the opinion of this House, a seniors' bill of rights should be enacted which embodies the principle that Ontario's older citizens are respected members of the community, providing invaluable resources to the community through their contribution to the social, cultural, historic and spiritual enrichment of the community as well as providing an abundance of experienced leadership;

And further, that the province of Ontario should develop a Seniors' Bill of Rights to reinforce a sense of independence, dignity and choice for our seniors.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Sergio has moved private member's notice of motion number 31. Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Sergio, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr Sergio: I'm delighted to initiate the debate in this hour dedicated to the members of this House, which we know as our private members' time. I am delighted to debate the resolution which I have introduced this morning in the House. This resolution, if approved, in my humble opinion, will have a profound impact on the lives of Ontario seniors, a sizable group whose numbers are estimated at some 1.54 million, representing about 12.6% of the province's total population.

Statistics tell us that by the year 2028, Ontario's seniors population will more than double to 3.2 million. Already, as of this year, some 73,000 reside in some 600 nursing homes, and some 35,000 more reside in some 650 retirement homes. Let us not forget that we have thousands more of our Ontario citizens afflicted with Alzheimer's, and people with dementia. I am sure that every member of this House and this government thinks about this very large sector of our population.

Further, I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should develop a seniors strategy, which will go far in providing a sense of independence, dignity and choice in our seniors' daily lives.

In a modern culture increasingly defined by its frenetic pace and self-obsessed nature, it is not surprising that we often neglect to take into account the invaluable contri-

bution seniors have made to society as a whole. Primarily through their immense wealth of experience, sage-like maturity and their role as patrons of culture and our historic tradition, our elderly serve as society's steadfast anchor, a vital source of enlightenment and expertise. This recognition is long overdue, and it's about time we begin acknowledging our seniors.

This aforementioned resolution aims to improve seniors' quality of life. First and foremost, intolerant acts in the form of flagrant ageism, stereotyping and acts of discrimination will no longer be condoned. Simply put, seniors warrant our respect.

Second, appropriate provincial authorities are encouraged to step up their efforts in promoting healthier lifestyles for seniors and continue to include seniors' groups in the planning and execution of government-sponsored awareness campaigns. Seniors have a vested interest in the planning of their daily lives, particularly with respect to arranging healthier lifestyles, their own personal wellness, and continued opportunity for intellectual and spiritual growth.

Third, as the honourable Minister of Health has mentioned on numerous occasions in the past, the McGuinty government will continue to provide for a long-term-care system that is effective, trusted and accessible across the province.

Finally, what I believe to be one of the resolution's most significant components is this government's commitment to offering seniors support against various forms of abuse—be it financial, physical or emotional—ensuring that neglect and exploitation within both the local community and health care settings is brought to public light and dealt with appropriately. Truly, we should ensure that seniors' rights are fully protected and promoted.

While I may be repeating myself—because I think seniors are very worthwhile—I think rights are important for our seniors: that they have the right to have their right to work protected and the right to securing acceptable retirement; that they have the right to access a protective social service for the vulnerable and the right to a dignified system for end-of-life care for those in need; and that seniors have the right to remain in their communities and in their homes through supportive, community-based long-term-care facilities.

Members of this assembly, this resolution is an important step in ensuring that seniors are given the well-deserved opportunity to enjoy their golden years free of worry and fear. They have provided an immense service to society, and now we have a chance to pay them back in kind. This is what I envisage to accomplish with this

resolution. Is it hard to do what we know is right for seniors in Ontario?

The seniors' challenge must be embraced, carried on with vitality, vigour, persuasive strength and convincing conviction. If our young are priceless, then our seniors are golden. Often, we laud our seniors, we praise our seniors, we take pride in our seniors. Often, we say that our seniors have given us their best. If we mean that, and I know every member of this House does, then it is our responsibility to give them back our very best. Members of this House, I call on you today to get started. I am asking for your kind support of this resolution today.

1010

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): First of all, let me congratulate the member for York West, a member I have known in this House for many, many years, and recognize his abiding interest in the welfare of seniors in this province.

I'm pleased to respond to this resolution, having held the responsibility of creating the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat. Being the first long-term-care minister in Canada, I've had occasion to devote a lot of my political career to the interests of seniors.

I want to begin by saying that I share with all members of the House our admiration and respect for Ontario's 1.6 million seniors, but the proof in the pudding of any political promise is the delivery of those services, and what we have to date in the province of Ontario is a certain contradiction in the manner in which seniors are being treated by the current government.

One would always look for a certain degree of consistency. So there are two issues I want to raise in the short time that I have this morning. One is the context of a bill of rights for seniors, which is a noble gesture and one worthy of support. But as I recall, as the draftsman of Ontario's Victims' Bill of Rights, which contains specific rights that were enjoyed by victims, it was voted against three times in this House by Liberal members, consistently. Their argument was that you can't have a bill of rights that only talks about platitudes and good intentions; it has to have some real teeth.

The draft that the honourable member opposite has shared with me does not in any way, shape or form represent anything that comes close to the model that was finally developed by our government as a Victims' Bill of Rights. In fact, it is one of the standard platitudinous type of arrangements. Although we can support that as a resolution, I think it would be wrong to mislead the public to suggest that a seniors' bill of rights, without teeth, without absolute rights that can be found in law—it wouldn't really be worth the paper it's written on, which were the words that the Liberals used when referring to the Victims' Bill of Rights.

So it's worthy of support, but let's not make this into something that it really isn't, because what is required is a whole series of legislative protections. If we look at the current track record of the government, one of the platitudinous statements that's included in the draft is that

neglect and exploitation within the local community and in health care settings would be an issue that the government would protect them from. Well, how is it that the government is protecting seniors from neglect and exploitation in health care settings when it delists optometry services and it delists physiotherapy services and it delists chiropractic services? Isn't that a contradiction? Doesn't that fly in the face of the principles of a bill of rights? Ontario's seniors are now, for the first time in their entire lifetime, paying a health tax and a premium tax for OHIP, which they never did in the past; people over the age of 65 were exempt. Actually, for the first time in Canadian history, we've got senior citizens in nursing home beds who are paying this tax. How is that protecting seniors on their limited income?

Now, there are a whole series of issues, which I feel require much more fulsome debate, and it's unfortunate that in the course of an hour we're not able to do that. But I do want to say to the member opposite—he is an honourable member, he has presented something which, in my opinion, is worthy of support, but I want to remind him to look at his own Hansard, at comments that and he others made about bills of rights that didn't have any real legislative rights contained within them. If that isn't, then this is just a simple resolution that demonstrates for all in this House our respect and admiration for a generation that sacrificed extensively to create the greatest province in our country, and for those seniors we will be eternally grateful. I just feel that a bill of rights for seniors should have teeth in it, should have real rights in it, and failure to do that is just a very wonderful, warm statement of intent by all of us.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I certainly join the member from Burlington in supporting in principle the concept of a seniors' bill of rights. It's certainly a great way to raise awareness, and if anyone has raised awareness of seniors' issues, it's Cam Jackson.

Just last Friday, a fellow named Harry Gundry down in my riding turned 108. I'm positive he's the oldest senior in my riding and probably one of the oldest in Ontario. Harry is in good health and good spirits. I know his son Doug pretty well. Doug was interviewed in the Simcoe Reformer. He was asked, "How would it come to pass that your dad is 108 years old?" His son Doug said, "We have an 18-year-old dog, so there must be something in the water," but he alluded that it may have been genes as well. His father, Harry, did his own banking up until last year. He stopped driving at age 93, and the only time he was ill, according to his son, was when he fell off his horse. He no longer rides his horse because his horse died, but if we can all follow the steps of someone like Harry Gundry—Harry is from Vittoria. Vittoria is a very small community. There is a lady in Vittoria, Clara Bingleman, who is 105 years old. I think of other people in my riding. My driver during one of the elections was Sadie McQueen. She passed away just short of 100 years old. Many of us locally would also remember fondly Daisy Arthur.

I know Pat Spencer is in the Legislature today with her colleagues. They are here to observe our deliberations on

the Dental Hygiene Act. I think Pat would know a number of these people. We know dental hygienists are an important component of looking after seniors in our communities, people who have built the Ontario that we live in today. They built our roads; they built our schools. They went through the Depression. They fought in the Second World War and Korea. The challenge for our government, for us as a society, is to build a province where seniors can live with respect, compassion and independence. I truly hope that this motion today will help us to continue down that road.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion of the member from York West, who has introduced this. I want to just put on the record, and I've said it many times before, that the riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock has the second-highest population of seniors in the province, so issues affecting our seniors are very important to me. They have a very active seniors' group there. Judy Muzzi is the president of the Ontario seniors' group. She keeps us informed of all the seniors' issues, and there are many.

Like many of these motions, this is one that, as my colleague from Burlington said, is long on fine rhetoric but does not speak to how or when it may be implemented. However, it is a first step, and, as the Chinese proverb says, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

We could use all the time speaking to this motion detailing how this government has not done enough for our province's seniors during its first year. But in the spirit of the season, I'm sure we're going to focus on some positive messaging, what we can do to persuade the members opposite that our seniors are to a large degree responsible for the freedoms and the high standard of living that we enjoy in Ontario. We certainly owe them a debt of gratitude for all they have done. A seniors' bill of rights would help reinforce a sense of independence, dignity and choice for our seniors.

1020

I know that the member from Burlington, who has spoken, worked for many years to bring seniors' issues to the attention of this place, and continues to do so quite well in all his efforts. They certainly made people's lives better in many different ways. The PC government made a lot of contributions to the seniors in our province and recognized that our current prosperity is through their hard work and sacrifices.

The long-term-care services were very non-existent. I remember when my dad was elderly and needed extra care, it was such a struggle to get a long-term-care facility that could fit his needs. I know that in the years that have followed since 1997, we've had a lot more long-term-care beds in the province—20,000—but certainly in the riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock there are a lot of long-term-care facilities that can accommodate seniors' needs, and they no longer have the extensive years of waiting that used to exist.

The current shortage of doctors, I hear from many of my seniors in the riding, is extensive, and it is troubling

to them that they can't access family doctors. I'm hoping that nurse practitioners are going to play more of a role in rural Ontario so that they do have the front-line care they deserve.

We're hoping this has some teeth and that it's going to be enacted so that seniors have the rights, freedoms and privileges they deserve and have the ability to stay in their homes longer. What a challenge it is in rural Ontario: the hydro rates are going up, taxes are going up and insurance is going up. It's going to be more and more difficult, and seniors want to stay in their homes as long as they can. So if we can help in any way—we can talk about the seniors' tax credit. I think it should be more so that it gives them that extra bit of money, so that they can pay their bills and stay in their own homes and not become vulnerable seniors.

Seniors need to have their right to work protected. Ageism and stereotyping of all older Ontarians should be combated. Seniors play a very active role in our communities. They give back to their communities immensely. They get organized, and they just make our communities have a much higher quality of life.

So I think that I am going to support this motion. I'm waiting for some details, for some teeth, because we do need to act on it. I know there are many people who want to speak on this today, so I will let my turn go.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm delighted to be able to stand in support of my colleague's resolution advocating the incorporation of a seniors' bill of rights in the province of Ontario. It's interesting. The first challenge, I think, is defining what is a senior. I can tell you, I recently got into a movie because I was a senior. Some people get free coffee because they're seniors, and others have to wait to be able to access certain reliefs within government support services because they need to be that age to be a senior.

So the idea of incorporating a bill of rights for seniors is actually acknowledging that there's an issue and a challenge, growing from 1.5 million up to over six million seniors by the year 2008, which is going to be a challenge for any government that's in place in dealing with a very significant bulge. I think we started out as yuppies, and now we're growing into what they call guppies or grumpies, whatever it is. We were upwardly mobile, and now we're going to be greying and mobile.

The other challenge we have is that we need to recognize that we live in a global world and that a lot of the people who are in our communities today are here without the advantage of support systems or extended families. That's a whole new reality for a very cosmopolitan city such as Toronto. It has as many challenges as even in the rural community where, again, they don't have the support systems that they require as well. But when you look at the need, for example, with large ethnic populations—and I've said this many times—where almost 51% of the children in our schools come from every country in the world except Antarctica and Greenland, you know that we have a challenge around ethnic-specific home care and/or long-term care.

We also know that as people age, the ethnicity issue becomes really important to them, because there's a level of comfort with their language, a level of comfort with their history and where they were. That really came to the forefront for me in a long-term-care facility—it was a facility for very elderly people—where they had put showers in. The clients were terrified—and I use the word “terrified”—of going into the showers. What people had forgotten was that many of those people had lived through the Nazi Holocaust, so the showers for them were a terrifying experience. That's the kind of sensitivity that we now need to think about in a growing seniors' population, because it is different from when our parents first came to this country.

So the issue of ethnic-specific long-term-care facilities dealing with banking—you can think of any number of issues. The idea of even learning how to use an ATM, computers, brings me into another issue around life-long learning. With the last government, they actually took the access to life-long learning away from seniors. They cut back and cut down and actually took away continuing education courses, because they didn't value the fact that you need to continue to learn, to use your grey cells, as I call them, in order to stimulate your social life, because you often are with your peers, but also the idea of learning in order to continue to grow, because every day is a new experience, and a computer is a really good example. If you didn't live in the age when the computer began, and you need to learn and are in your 70s, where do you go? If you are of modest means, where do you go? Yet the computer is very much a part of everybody's life today. So there's that part of continuing education.

The other is the statistics, and the shelves are lined with them, the research that will tell you that if you provide access to such things as Tai Chi or even bridge, which stimulates your mind, you're going to have a healthier senior and therefore you're going to reduce your dependence on long-term-care facilities and on medical facilities. Yet we took away that life-long learning aspect from them. That's why a seniors' bill of rights is required, because they deserve the opportunity. If we believe in and espouse life-long learning, then we need to walk our talk, and how do we do that except by protecting that right in some form of legislation?

We also need to look at how we can foster relationships. If you go back to the fact that many people in this country do not have extended families, I can tell you that when you put a nursery school next to people in a long-term-care facility, it's a whole new world for both. Again, that's part of every person's rights, to interact with another individual. But how do we foster that, how do we really engage that process, if we don't even have the opportunity to talk about it in the first place or if we don't believe that should continue to exist?

We also need to look at the issue of discrimination. I always found it so abhorrent when I thought of how a child was abused, but the fact that you have elder abuse blows my mind. Yet that is something that is happening and is more prevalent in our society than ever before.

Again, how do we protect people if we're not prepared to talk about something that's very contentious?

I'm going to be sharing my time with my colleague from London, and I know that he's going to expand on many of the same kinds of themes, because he deals with this on a regular basis in his community as well.

Let's talk about the consideration of public policies as we move forward. One of the issues last year—I live in an area which has a significant number of seniors, so when I knocked on the door and people said, “We're going to get all this tax relief from the Tory government,” I'd say to them, “Folks, step back and take a good look at this. You're going to get tax relief on one hand, but where do you think they're going to get the money from on the other hand, especially if they're not going to raise taxes? They're going to do what they did in the United States: They're going to put a capital gains tax on your home when you sell it. If in fact you sell it to go down, you pay the difference in the capital gains tax, or if it becomes part of your estate, it becomes part of a capital gains tax.” That was the dishonesty, I felt, in many respects, because it wasn't as straightforward in giving all of the facts out to seniors.

Let's talk about mandatory retirement. Where do we start with that conversation if in fact we don't believe seniors have a right to have that as part of the discussion?

Let's talk about the ability, as was said, to live in their homes. Is it a right? Or by the age of 90 must you be stuck in a facility that says, “You can't cope,” because we feel that we know more than you do? Do we listen to seniors? I have a mother-in-law who's 94 this year and quite happy in her home, as long as she has the support services. That physiotherapist was there in her home not long ago, just to help her learn how to go up and down the stairs.

1030

Let's talk about healthy lifestyles and how we can provide the information and the tools to seniors to enable them to continue to be healthy in their homes, the medical support, and finally, let's talk about their vulnerability if we don't look after them. We always say that we hold our world as custodians for the future, and that's for the children, but the children will inherit each and every one of us. So how do we put in place policies, practices, procedures and legislation to ensure that the children will do this in a way that we would deem responsible?

There are so many issues out there, and that's why this is neither long on rhetoric nor short on substance, ladies and gentlemen. This is a really good beginning of a discussion that needs to take place in this House on many fronts. I'll throw out to all of you for consideration: Let's talk about 6.5 million seniors driving. If you don't think that's an issue that we're going to have to struggle with in the not-too-distant future, then I think we're all living in never-never land.

I have great admiration, and I acknowledge that there is a recognition on how we can move forward. I have to tell you that seniors in my community in Etobicoke Centre would tell you that there's a whole lot to said for grey power. It's phenomenal.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): As always, I'm honoured to stand up and be part of many debates, and today I'm honoured to stand up and talk about the resolution brought by the great member of York West, the bill of rights for senior citizens in this province. I talk about it because it's very important, not just for the seniors but for all of us, because it's our future. I want to talk about how we can protect our future, because every one of us is going to become a senior citizen at one time in our lives. Therefore, I think it's important for every one of us to speak in support and try to do something in order to protect our future.

I decided 14 or 15 years ago to volunteer. I went to a senior citizens' home in my riding called Dearness Home. It's one of the greatest homes dealing with senior citizens in my riding of London-Fanshawe. I had the chance and the privilege to speak with many seniors. I spent time every once in a while with them talking about their frustration and their isolation, because they felt isolated from the mainstream community. They felt discriminated against.

This hurt my feelings back then, and it caught my attention. A huge segment of our society, almost 1.6 million people, is being ignored. I believe that's why the member from York West brought this issue to the attention of the House, in order to do something to connect that huge segment of our society to the mainstream community and acknowledge the hard work they did for all of us to enhance the society in which we live today.

My colleague from Etobicoke Centre spoke about a very important issue, about our community being diverse, multicultural. I had the chance to meet with several groups from different ethnic backgrounds. I would say they are probably listening to us today, because it's very important to them. The group was put together from Portuguese and Italians. They came to my office and started speaking about the seniors of both those communities. They brought to my attention, they said to me, "You know, when people grow older, they tend to forget the second language they learned when they came to this land. They go back to their native tongue, and then they have a problem."

The seniors who have English as their second language, when they grow older, they forget the second language they learned, so they're looking for some kind of support. They're looking for a group of people who can speak their language, who know about their traditions and culture, who know about their heritage, their food, their music; whatever support we can provide in order to comfort those people who worked hard for us. I think that's a very important element of protecting our seniors in this province.

Also, my colleague from Burlington was speaking about how our government is trying to tax seniors, trying to ignore their right to medical support. I would say, for the record, that all the seniors in this province, especially after 65 years of age, are allowed to seek medical support from our government, and it's free, with no payment. This is very important for all the seniors in this province.

After all of us heard from the media about the abuse going on in many senior citizens' homes in this province, our government went one step further and conducted a review. That's why my colleague who is sitting behind me here, Monique Smith, the PA to the Minister of Health, went all the way across the province, visited many senior citizens' homes and conducted a good review to provide the ministry and this government with a report, to tell them the best way to deal with our senior citizens in this province. I believe it was a good and credible report. As a result of that report, the PA to the Minister of Health provided all senior citizens in this province with a free phone number to contact the ministry and submit their complaints. And, of course, the ministry will look into their complaints right away and will do something about them in order to protect them.

Also, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has taken many steps, trying to invest more money to support facilities, to support senior citizens remaining in the homes they love, among their families, in the place they grew up in.

It's very important that we're taking many steps to protect them, and I think speaking in support of the bill brought by my colleague from York West is very important. We're not going to make it a political debate. I think all the people in this place will support it because it's very important, not only to protect our seniors at the present time, but also to protect our future, because it's very important to plan for the future. That's what I think my colleague is thinking of, and I will gladly support your bill.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have waited for a little while to see the tenor of the debate from the other speakers, and it appears that everyone is going to be supporting this good bill. This is an idea whose time has come, and probably come again, and if it wasn't being dealt with today, it would most certainly have to be dealt with in the next few years, as the number of senior citizens in this country and indeed around the world continues to rise.

People all too soon forget that the whole cause of senior citizens, the whole cause of people living beyond 65, is a relatively recent phenomenon in terms of humankind. Less than 100 years ago, in Germany, Bismarck came out with the first old age pensions. The pensions were pegged at 65, and the reason that age was chosen is that very few people lived to 65. In fact, only about 10% of the people of that country, and indeed of our country in those days, lived to the ripe old age of 65. In fact, when the Canada pension plan was first organized, the average payment made to a person who reached that ripe old age of 65 was 13 payments; that is, they lived 13 months, on average, beyond their 65th birthday. So if you were lucky enough to reach that milestone of 65 and you were one of the first recipients of an old age pension in Canada, odds are that you would receive but 13 payments for the balance of your life. Many people did not get 13 payments; some got a few more. But the average was some 13 months that one lived, or to the age of 66 years and one month.

1040

Much has happened since then, of course. In the relatively short time of two or three generations, people are living much, much longer. In fact, the number of senior citizens we have today is higher than at any other time in human history. At no time in human history has the number of people living beyond the age of 65 ever been this high.

Of course, the reasons are quite simple. There are better food opportunities. People are better able to have nutrition. There are better public health opportunities in this country, this province, and indeed in most places around the world. As well, medical practices have improved, with operations, with drug therapy, so that people who ordinarily would not have lasted into their senior years are now increasingly doing so, to the extent that most people who live beyond their fifth birthday can expect to become a senior citizen, barring any catastrophic illness, any catastrophic emergency or accident.

The life expectancy in Canada now for women has gone beyond 80 years, and the life expectancy for men is approaching 80 years. So we can expect that the majority of people, certainly the majority of people in this room, will attain around that age. That means they will have been retired and will be considered seniors in our society for some 15 or more years. We need to start looking at how we protect those individuals.

There was a time, of course, when senior citizens did not need protection, because the reality was there weren't very many of them, and those who were there were largely looked after within the confines of their home. They were relatively rare individuals, and usually the children had the obligation of looking after their parents if in fact they were aged.

But there is a big blip happening, and I'm probably part of the leading edge of that blip, called the baby boomers. Baby boomers make up a huge portion of Canadian society. It's a phenomenon that is not known throughout the world; in fact, it's not even common in the United States. They don't know that phrase, because the number of children born between the Second World War and the Korean War was not nearly so large as it was in Canada. But we have a lot of boomers here and there will be a lot more seniors. As has correctly been pointed out, by the year 2028 when I myself, if I'm still alive, will have attained my 80th birthday, there will be 6.5 million Ontarians who are senior citizens. We need to start looking at that whole blip. We need to start looking at the numbers of people and how we are going to care for them. We need to look at our frail elderly. We need to make sure there are safeguards in place not only for their well-being, but also to prevent possible abuse.

In East York, when I had the privilege of being the mayor of that municipality—

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): And a good one it was.

Mr Prue: And a good municipality it was, as my colleague points out—we had a program, the first instituted program of its kind, which was orchestrated by

the police and the community to look at the problem of fraud against senior citizens. We noticed there were a number of fraud cases. There were unscrupulous contractors who came in and offered to do work that wasn't necessary on houses, charged exorbitant rates and often walked away. We saw people going door to door collecting for non-existent charities, taking in fraudulent ways seniors' money, which they didn't have a lot of, but they tend to be very generous. We saw that there were assaults against senior citizens in the streets. We saw as well that there were assaults in nursing homes.

There was a general feeling that senior citizens were being neglected, and our community came together to make sure that that neglect was stopped. We were very proud of the fact that the unscrupulous people who were going door to door were stopped. I don't believe they went away, other than that they left our community because we started to inform seniors through fraud calendars, meetings and a police presence that these people were no longer welcome, and they moved on to more hospitable climes.

We took, as part of our reference in all of this, the country of Japan. Japan has a remarkable feeling for their senior citizens. In fact, they don't refer to them as senior citizens; they refer to them as national treasures. Someone who reaches 80 years of age is deemed to be a national treasure. They deem that and they say that and they mean that, because these people are the repositories of the old Japan. If you go to that country today, in Tokyo or in any of the larger cities you will find that they're very much like Toronto. It is hard to tell that that is the old Japan. You're not going to see pagodas, you're not going to see rice fields, you're not going to see all those things that one might idealize about Japan. You're going to see ultra-modern cities just like this one, and to go there is to go to just another big city. You need to get out into the country areas to still find the old Japan. But the Japanese understand that the people who understand what Japan was, the kind of country Japan was at the turn of the last century and right up until well after the Second World War—it was a country built of farms, a country built of culture and of tradition, a country that had a remarkable and rich cultural history.

The repositories of those ideals are the elderly; it is the elderly who remember those and can talk to the young people who all around them see a modern city just like ours, who do not understand their old culture, who do not understand from whence they came or what life was like. The Japanese have deemed their elderly citizens national treasures. These national treasures go out into the schools, meet with young people, meet in all the hallowed halls of learning to pass on to this generation and to future generations what it means to be Japanese. We should do the same thing.

We need to realize the changing realities of our own countries. We need to realize that we are increasingly becoming an urban phenomenon. There are very few people who make their living off the land any more. There are very few people who live in northern towns or

small communities. Increasingly, people live in large cities like Toronto or Ottawa or Hamilton.

Mr Ramal: London.

Mr Prue: Or London. I mean, there are lots of them.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: I don't want to leave out London. No, no. I will not leave out London.

We need, in this new reality, to understand that this bill will go some way in saying that we have national treasures. I hope that kind of language can be included as well.

But in doing that, I would put to you, it is simply not enough that we have national treasures. We need to make a commitment, as a society, as a government, as a Legislature, to ensure that not only do we recognize these truly remarkable people but also realize and recognize that they have special needs and that those special needs will involve the expenditure of taxpayers' dollars.

It will require additional monies for geriatric care, as the number of seniors and those living particularly above 80 years continues to grow. We will need money for seniors' housing. There is all too little seniors' housing available in this province. There is a growing need, as people age and as people are looking for alternative lifestyles, to find housing that is suitable for them.

There is some wonderful seniors' housing put forward by the municipality of metropolitan Toronto, as it then was, and now by the city of Toronto. There are some wonderful private ideas. There's a group called Stay at Home in Leaside that has built life-share condominiums for people who leave their homes, who find that a home is just too onerous, and can live in a wonderful condominium apartment with other seniors in a life-lease plan. There are other options available as well.

We need money for pensions. The Canada pension plan and other pension plans that people are buying into may not be sustainable in the long run. We need to take a very careful look at whether it will be sustainable to look after 6.5 million senior citizens by the year 2028.

We need money and we need opportunities to make sure that our people remain healthy. I would again ask the government to reconsider your privatization and delisting of optometry, chiropractic and physiotherapy, because many seniors rely and will continue to rely on these programs.

1050

It may surprise people, but it shouldn't, that most seniors have a hard time having sufficient money. Seniors, as a group, tend to be poor, especially women who have not had access to pensions and who do not have a lot of money saved up. If you go into the homes, into the seniors' residences and find those who are lucky enough to be in a subsidized unit, you will find out how incredibly low their salaries and their annual incomes are. We need to make sure that doesn't happen.

We need to improve OHIP for them. The health tax is not the way to go, quite frankly, for our seniors. They should be exempt from that tax.

We need go back to the vehicle tax credit so that seniors and people who are disabled can get around. That tax credit has been taken away and ought not to have been taken away. I recognize that it is there for the most vulnerable and for the poorest, but many of our seniors rely on adequate and modified transportation to have full and complete lives.

We need to ensure that our seniors are well cared for. In a recent example from my own municipality, Community Care East York lost, through a very failed and flawed bidding process, the right to look after long-term care in our community after having done so for some 16 years. The seniors had people they trusted ripped away from them. It went to the lowest-bidding group, which I am convinced will never have the support of the community that Community Care East York has had till this time.

We need to do more for recreational programs. Municipalities all over are strapped for cash. They are starting to charge seniors for such recreational programs as swimming, which they need to remain physically healthy.

So there we go. We've got the whole thing. Seniors are a remarkable asset. We go to the Legions, we talk to people from CARP, we talk to seniors' organizations, and we can see that they have intergenerational programs. We see them working in the hospitals, we see them working in the municipalities, we see them doing just the most incredible jobs for us. They are a resource that our society needs, but we in turn need to assist them to be that resource. We need them to give us the focus on from whence we came and to remember the old skills and abilities that are slowly but surely being lost.

I salute our seniors. I salute the member who brought this forward. We need to do this bill and so much more to ensure that those people who have come before us and who live with us are well cared for.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the debate today. I think the member's motion is in good faith. He's a strong member, the member from York West, and I believe he thinks this is something that should be done. Certainly a seniors' bill of rights is symbolically important. The problem he's got is, how does he put this into law? Is it going to be a statement or is it going to be actual legislation? That's something that's going to have to be dealt with, because this is just a resolution today. We're just voting on a motion that is a good-faith motion.

I'm proud of the work my government did in the years from 1995 to 2003. In our area, we had a shortage of long-term-care beds, and the elderly in Barrie had to go to a facility outside the community. I'm very pleased that during that mandate we created over 1,000 long-term-care beds for our seniors and tremendous growth in the retirement home business also. I'm very proud of the work that was done at Victoria Village. Sam Cancilla, a good friend of mine, spearheaded that particular project with Doug Jagges. It's a state-of-the-art facility for seniors along the lines of Villa Columbo, which the member from York West would be very familiar with.

The work done at Grove Park Home to expand its facilities, the IOOF, Roberta Place and Woods Park home in Barrie are just classic examples of the new standards that were brought in during our mandate.

There's also the work of the seniors through our area—the Danube Seniors Leisure Centre with Sylvia Luxton and the members there; they have done great work in the Bradford area—the Alcona Lions Club with Larry Wilkins, and also the Barrie seniors' centre that we have at the Allandale Recreation Centre, and the Parkview Seniors' Centre and the good work that's been done by Jean McCann and others to show that the seniors are very active in the community and are doing a great job.

I'm also proud of the fact that we brought in the community care access centres during our mandate. The Simcoe county community care access centre does a great job in terms of providing service to people who want to stay at home but aren't able to do everything, but also in directing them into placement with respect to long-term-care facilities. I'm very proud of that record and the work that was done in my riding.

So I wish the member well, but I think you have to also keep in mind some of the things that his government has done in terms of making seniors pay for OHIP, the delisting of chiropractic, eye care and physiotherapy services, and removing the cap with respect to hydro rates, which make the quality of life for senior citizens a little bit more trying.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for York West has two minutes to reply.

Mr Sergio: Thank you very much. It's very encouraging to hear the contribution that various members of the House have made on today's resolution: the members for Burlington, Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, London-Fanshawe, Etobicoke Centre, Beaches-East York, and Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr Tascona: Barrie.

Mr Sergio: Yes, you can have the whole shebang, Joe. Thank you.

I would find it very hard if there is one member in the House who doesn't have a very solid representation of seniors in their constituency, and I'm sure that you yourself, Speaker, have a good number of seniors in your area. I can look in this House here and see that there are members who belong to this national treasure, as the member has mentioned. We would have to have perhaps a survey and see who has more. I think I have the most seniors in Ontario. Maybe my colleague for Etobicoke Centre has, or maybe the member—she spoke so eloquently—for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. Maybe she does indeed have the largest seniors population. But no matter what, wherever they are, we all share the same problem, we all share the same concern.

As the member for London-Fanshawe said, if you go into nursing homes, community centres, seniors' clubs, you really know the problem that is affecting our seniors today. And if you don't find the seniors themselves, you can engage in a discussion with their family members,

the younger ones, and they will tell you the difficulties that senior members are experiencing. So I'm very gratified and I thank the members of this House for their support today.

DENTAL HYGIENE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1991 SUR LES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

Mr Flaherty moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Dental Hygiene Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les hygiénistes dentaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Flaherty has up to 10 minutes.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I am pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 116. I introduced this bill on June 24 of this year to remove the restriction that currently prohibits dental hygienists from cleaning patients' teeth without first having to obtain a dentist's order.

If I may speak by way of background to the bill, the College of Dental Hygienists was created in 1993, with royal assent then. There was an anomaly, a hangover from the previous jurisdiction of the college of dentists, with respect to this one particular item of oral hygiene and oral hygiene care. That has persisted over the years and has not been corrected. The purpose of the bill, and it's a short bill, is quite simply to delete the requirement that there be a dentist's order in place in order for a dental hygienist to conduct that oral hygiene care.

1100

That issue has been looked at by various members of this House. I'm pleased that there is another private member's bill that stands in the name of the member for Etobicoke Centre, who is on the other side, as you know. That is Bill 91, which is to the same effect, to accomplish the same what I consider to be good public policy goal of deleting this requirement.

Why is it a public policy good? It's a public policy good because it will increase access to oral hygiene, to health care in Ontario, which I believe is a public policy goal shared by my Liberal friends opposite and also by the members of the third party.

This is an attempt to delete this anomaly, this exception in the law of the province. I believe there is tripartisan support for the bill, and I hope that is reflected in our discussions today.

Those who have indicated some opposition to the bill outside of this place have spoken about safety issues. Those issues were addressed by the relevant regulatory body, which is the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council in Ontario. They were asked to consider this issue of making sure that the safety issue is dealt with back in the mid-1990s. They considered it not only once

but several times, and reported back to the Minister of Health in May 1996. I commend to members this report by the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council dated May 1996, which has not yet been acted upon.

The recommendation on page 27 of the report is, "HPRAC recommends that the Dental Hygiene Act be amended to allow dental hygienists to perform their authorized acts of scaling teeth and root planing including (incidental) curetting of surrounding tissue without an order, subject to appropriate restrictions in regulations and standards." I would hope that if this bill successfully passes second reading today, it will go to committee and be dealt with at committee in more detail with respect to those standards, as recommended by the council.

I will say nothing more about the safety issue other than that it has been dealt with by the appropriate regulatory authority and the recommendation made to the Minister of Health, which I commend to all members of this House.

I believe there is also support by the Premier. He wrote to the Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association on September 29, 2003, indicating, "In government, we are committed to acting on the HPRAC recommendations." Those are the recommendations to which I have just made reference, including the recommendation to delete the requirement of the dentist's order in order for a dental hygienist to conduct that type of oral hygiene care.

Why do this? What's the difference for people in Ontario if this step forward is made? The difference is primarily for persons who are not mobile, vulnerable people in the province. If you're mobile and you live in an urban area, it's not too difficult to get to the dentist, and dental hygiene is available there. The challenge is particularly acute for people who have limited mobility, persons with disabilities—obviously physical disabilities, but in my own experience as president of the Head Injury Association of Durham Region, I can tell you that we also saw this issue time and time again with respect to the transportation needs of persons with cognitive disabilities and other physical disabilities which may or may not accompany cognitive disabilities. It is also a significant problem with respect to older persons in Ontario who suffer from decreased mobility, particularly people in long-term-care centres. Earlier this week we had the executive director of the ALS Society of Ontario here talking about the 750 persons in Ontario who suffer from ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, a degenerative disease which has increasingly limited mobility as the disease progresses. Regrettably, that's also true for other diseases, as the Speaker and other members of this place know.

So we want to make sure, I think, in the interest of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable people in the province of Ontario, that they have the opportunity to have good access to oral hygiene. How do we do that? We do that by ensuring that dental hygienists have the opportunity to provide that care and that the care can be taken to these persons who require the care, and not insist that they find some way of getting to a dentist's office.

So this is true. It's true in the north. It's certainly true in rural Ontario. I've had the benefit of talking to quite a few dental hygienists about some of these issues and some of the important steps they have taken to help people. There are some troubling stories about the care that is required by people, particularly people with limited accessibility, and their need to get the care they need, which does require someone taking the care to them.

There is support also by the Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd Centres for homeless men in Toronto and in Hamilton. As other members have, I'm sure, I've visited the centre in Toronto, and it is an advantage that oral hygienists can bring that kind of care to persons who otherwise would not receive the care at the shelters. The Little Brothers of the Good Shepherd have written, indicating their support for the bill, and these are, of course, dedicated persons who dedicate their lives to helping persons who need help in the evenings to get off the streets and to receive this kind of fundamental health care.

The Alzheimer Society is also supportive. Again, as I understand it, because of the mobility issue, the transportation issue is always a major issue when dealing with persons with disabilities in the province of Ontario and other vulnerable people.

As I say, it is not a bill that is complex. It is a straightforward bill. It changes a law that arguably ought to have been changed some years ago in order to meet the goal that I'm sure the Liberal government shares because of the Premier's commitment to enhance access to oral hygiene care in the province of Ontario. I consider it to be an important step forward. I think that the safety concerns that have been expressed by some in the province are legitimate concerns that have been thoroughly and adequately addressed by the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, resulting in the recommendation on page 27 of the report, which is rather—well, it's almost eight years old now, in terms of timing.

So I encourage members to speak up in favour of the proposed change in the laws of the province of Ontario. I thank the assistance that I have received from the Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association. Some of the members, including the president, Michele Carrick, are present in the gallery today. Their members are prepared to make that effort to provide this important health service to persons across the province of Ontario. It's particularly important for seniors, and I have letters from the associations representing seniors in Ontario, because appearance and oral hygiene are very important to all of us, particularly as we age.

So I commend the bill to all the members. I thank the members who are going to speak on the bill, and I hope they will be supportive.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to take part in this debate today because I think, for many people across Ontario, this is a very important issue. Perhaps 40 or 50 years ago, people did not think

that dental health was the most important priority. Other issues of physical health took first place. Dental health was something that was considered secondary or tertiary. But I think we recognize now that dental health is a very important issue. This private member's bill—and I know there's another private member's bill that addresses very much the same issue—is, I think, important for the public of Ontario.

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Let me say at the outset that I intend to support this private member's bill, and I urge all members to support it, because I think this will better the position for many people of this province in terms of access to dental health. Let me say as well that there may be some more detailed issues that need to be addressed, and the appropriate place to deal with those more detailed issues would be at committee where specific questions can be asked, specific issues can be raised and expert evidence can perhaps be called. In any case, those more detailed issues can most appropriately be dealt with there.

I, too, want to go into the history of this, because I believe the history is important. There is a lot of health care history to this issue. Let me go back to the letter which was sent by a former Minister of Health, the Honourable Ruth Grier, to the chair of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council. The Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council was set up to do the policy research for the Ministry of Health, to tell the Ministry of Health the issues that need to be addressed, some of the sub-issues and some of the complications. So a very detailed letter was sent by the then Minister of Health to the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council. This was in September 1994, and the letter reads:

“Re: Need for an ‘order’ from a dentist for dental hygienists to perform certain authorized acts.

“This letter is a referral to you on the issue of whether dental hygienists need an order from a dentist to perform their authorized acts of scaling teeth and root planing, including curetting of surrounding tissue, or whether dental hygienists should be allowed the option of initiating these procedures without an order, subject to appropriate conditions in regulations. The matter how this would best be accomplished must also be considered, should your review of the matter lead you to the conclusion that the latter option is preferable.

“This referral is made in accordance with section 12 of the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. This matter is a private for the ministry. I am therefore requesting that you complete your analysis” within a prescribed time frame.

The letter then goes on and says:

“I am seeking advice, not only on whether the proposed amendment would be in the public interest, but also on whether the advisory council feels that there are any pressing issues related to the proposed amendment which need immediate attention (eg, the fact that a number of hygienists may be operating without a protocol seems to be of immediate concern). If there are such

pressing issues, I would like the council's advice on what would be the best procedural way to address such questions in the absence of a legislative amendment” etc.

Then the letter goes on to raise a number of very specific questions to really narrow the issues:

“(1) What was the ‘status quo’ prior to the proclamation of the Regulated Health Professions Act? Did dental hygienists routinely self-initiate these acts?

“(2) Does the need for an ‘order’ from a dentist to allow a dental hygienist to perform scaling teeth and root planing, including curettage of surrounding tissue, negate self-governance of the dental hygiene profession?

“(3) Do dental hygienists have the training to assess adequately whether they should proceed independently with scaling teeth and root planing (including curetting of surrounding tissue) or whether they should insist the patient see a dentist or physician for an assessment and/or diagnosis?

“(4) Is an assessment by a hygienist enough, prior to initiating scaling teeth, root planing and curettage, or is a diagnosis necessary? If so, who should provide the diagnosis? A dentist? A physician? Either? Could the need for pre-screening (eg, for the purpose of prophylactic use of antibiotics) be addressed acceptably in some other way (such as a protocol)?

“(5) What does self-initiation mean? Is it really self-initiation of an act when a dental hygienist performs a procedure under a ‘standing order’ or ‘protocol’? Is the public interest served better if hygienists self-initiate scaling teeth and root planing?

“(6) Would public health dentistry be adversely affected if hygienists cannot self-initiate these procedures?

“(7) Is it more cost-effective for the health care system and patients for dental hygienists to practise on their own?”

And so the questions go on. Detailed questions were asked of this body which operates on a non-partisan basis, which is there to do the research to sort through the issues.

It was a very detailed referral letter to the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council in 1994. Now, not surprisingly, the council was not able to answer immediately, so the report was first submitted to the Minister of Health in September 1995. I want to note that by 1995 it was now a Conservative Minister of Health, so we're not dealing with something that happened under the NDP. Some of this was initiated under the NDP; then it was reported to a Conservative minister.

On April 23, 1996, the then minister wrote to the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council requesting further clarification of conclusions and recommendations. The report that was then finally submitted on May 17, 1996, was even more detailed. I simply want to refer to that report. It's a detailed report, and this is the kind of thing that members could actually look at in committee, because they answer all the questions, they engage in the debate, they engage in the discussion. There is, if I may, an examination and cross-examination,

re-examination of some of the issues, and this is non-partisan advice.

What is their recommendation? "The Health Professions Advisory Council recommends that the Dental Hygiene Act be amended to allow hygienists to perform their authorized acts of scaling teeth and root planing including (incidental) curetting of surrounding tissue without an order, subject to appropriate restrictions in regulations and standards. The regulations must clearly limit self-initiation to patients where there are no contraindications or uncertainty as to whether it is safe to proceed." So that was the recommendation, a non-partisan recommendation from people who were specifically there to provide advice.

In fact, if you go to Web site of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, this is what they say: "The Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council provides independent policy advice to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters related to the regulation of health professions in Ontario." That's their job, and as I said earlier, they were sent a very detailed referral letter which asked a number of specific questions, asked for research, asked for evidence and asked then for the opinion. Their opinion, after in effect studying it for two years, was, "HPRAC recommends that the Dental Hygiene Act be amended to allow dental hygienists to perform their authorized acts of scaling teeth and root planing including (incidental) curetting of surrounding tissue without an order." That was their recommendation.

Some would say, "What about this issue of regulations and standards?" Well, that's really what the regulation of a profession involves. This advisory council has said that hygienists should be able to do this work; now get down to the business of putting in place the appropriate regulations and standards so that everyone will know the scope of practice. They'll know exactly how this is going to be determined. That's what the regulatory process is really all about.

What has happened since then? I'm mindful that I've only got five minutes left. In fact, there are a number of things that have happened since then. The College of Dental Hygienists, after receiving this information, as the Minister of Health received it, actually sat down and started thinking about standards of practice. What should the standards of practice be? Because they were self-initiated, they have actually published since 1996 how dental hygienists would be regulated to operate within this recommendation that was made by the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council. So they have actually done some of this work already.

Now, I guess the question would be, what does this mean for ordinary folks? That's, at the end of the day, really what we're here about. What does this mean for ordinary folks? Well, as my colleague Mr Flaherty has indicated, it means some folks who might not have ready access. The advisory committee said very clearly when it set out its recommendation that with the appropriate regulations and standards in place, people's health would not be threatened; in fact, people's health would be better

served. So I think, generally, that is what this would mean for the average person out there across Ontario.

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I know that whenever you get into health care debates, you immediately get into debates about, "What is the scope of practice of this profession, ie, dentists and dental hygienists, and where do they conflict?" So there are likely some details that arise here; in fact, I know there are some details. Those are the kinds of things that I believe should go to committee. If this bill passes second reading and goes to committee, some of those nitty-gritty issues, the more detailed issues, can in fact be raised and dealt with at committee. I think that would be good work for the committee. In fact, it would be excellent, positive work for a committee to do in order to move this forward. And after hearing the evidence and listening to the analysis and the opinions, if the committee then wants to offer some amendments, so be it, but that's the place for those more detailed issues to be sorted through and worked upon.

I believe firmly, having some acquaintance with the history of this issue, with the reports and with the follow-up that's happened since then in terms of the work of the College of Dental Hygienists saying, "We need standards; we recognize that. Here's what we think should be the standards. We need regulation within this scope of practice. Here's what we think the regulation should be," with all of the work that's been done on this—and I must say, non-partisan work, work that has occurred under different governments—NDP, Conservative, Liberal—non-partisan work that was done by the advisory council, with all of the work that's been done here—and I say good work that's been done, thoughtful work, good analysis, good examination and re-examination of the issues—I believe all members of the Legislature should vote in favour of this measure today so that it can be sent to committee, and the next steps, the more detailed analysis, whether or not amendments are needed and, if amendments are needed, what kind of amendments there should be, that kind of work should now proceed.

I believe that literally hundreds of thousands of Ontarians would be very well served by the members of this Legislature voting to support this measure today and moving it to the next stage of the legislative process.

If I may just speak about the economics of the province, I don't know about other members, but what I hear people say to me every day is, "I work longer, I work harder, and at the end of the month I seem to have less in my bank and less in my pocket." As a pocketbook issue, this issue would speak to that. Making sure that people can have access to affordable, reliable, good, quality service in terms of dental health would be served by us passing this measure today.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the bill this morning and to share my time with my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Bill 116 is all about improving access to health care. It's about letting patients choose where they get their

teeth cleaned and choosing the health care practitioner who performs the procedure. It's also about allowing dental hygiene services to be brought to people who can't go to a dentist's office. It's about lowering the costs of oral hygiene treatments. And it's about letting the dental hygiene profession regulate itself in the public interest, as was intended when dental hygiene became a self-governing profession, independent from dentistry, in 1993.

We have far too many people in Ontario today who go without routine oral care and compromise their own health because of the order requirement. As a rule, dentists do not go to long-term-care facilities, they do not do house calls, and they aren't easily accessible in rural or remote areas. I've seen too many heart-rending stories about people in vulnerable situations who really let their own oral health care deteriorate. Removal of the order requirement will allow them to get the help and the care they need directly from a dental hygienist.

Bill 116 is also about implementing the recommendations of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Committee. It was this council that, after extensive reviews, recommended not once but twice that the order requirements should be removed in the public interest. Bill 116 is virtually identical to Bill 91, which I tabled in the House on June 4, 2004, and I support Bill 116 because I am convinced it is the right thing to do for the people in Ontario.

I've been impressed by the number of people who have taken the time to contact me in support of my bill or of Bill 116, and I really don't care whether it's my bill or the bill from the member for Whitby-Ajax that does it, as long as it gets done. There may not be many things on which the honourable member and I agree, but I can assure you that we do agree on this.

There are some who would have us believe that the removal of the order requirement will somehow endanger patient safety. I reject that claim, and I'd like to tell you why. The order requirement actually did not exist prior to 1993, so no one, not even opponents of Bills 116 and 91, has suggested that patient safety was in jeopardy previous to 1993 because of the absence of the order requirement. But suddenly, now, it's a serious issue for them. The order requirement was really added to the Dental Hygiene Act as a political compromise with dentistry in order to let self-regulation by dental hygiene go forward without opposition. It is ironic that some have now elevated the political expedient to something that is necessary to protect patient safety.

The Health Professions Legislation Review, which was spoken about earlier and was the precursor to the Regulated Health Professions Act, determined that hygienists have the knowledge, the skill and the judgment to perform their authorized act of scaling, root-planing and cleaning of teeth, which we understand can be done without an order.

In other jurisdictions in the United States and, actually, in British Columbia, dental hygienists work safely without the requirement of an order or any supervision by

dentists. As I have already said, the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council recommended that the order be removed in the public interest.

There are a few who suggest that the people who would benefit from the removal of the order requirement are people who are medically compromised and therefore need the order requirement to be retained so that dentists, not dental hygienists, decide when it's safe to clean a patient's teeth. These are seniors, residents of long-term care facilities, students studying away from home, of whom I have one, persons who rely on public health, residents of rural and remote areas, the home-bound, and those who are physically or mentally challenged.

In fact, according to the Ontario Dental Association, it's just about everybody. In a press release that was issued yesterday, the ODA states, "Most adults in Ontario have some form of medical condition" that requires a dentist's diagnosis before routine teeth cleaning. I actually thought that our health status was in better condition in Ontario, but obviously the ODA does not agree.

It is actually insulting to characterize that every senior is medically compromised, and it is fundamentally wrong to say that every resident of a long-term-care facility is medically compromised. The same goes for anyone who wants to exercise his or her choice as to where, when and by whom they get their teeth cleaned.

Those who oppose Bill 116 and Bill 91 suggest it's necessary for a dentist to examine a patient every time the patient has their teeth cleaned by a dental hygienist in a dental office. But that's not always the case. In public health, standing orders or protocols apply when the dental hygienist is responsible for deciding whether patients should or should not have their teeth cleaned, and no one has raised concerns about that particular practice. In remote communities and on First Nations reserves, dental hygienists are often the only dental practitioner whom patients see, and no one has raised concerns about that practice.

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I urge the honourable members to reflect on their own experience when they go to a dentist to have their teeth cleaned. I venture to say that if they are examined by the dentist at all, it's usually after the dental hygienist has completed the procedure. In fact, an independent survey found that 90% of dental hygienists always or usually analyze assessment data, determine significant findings, identify oral health-related factors, establish priorities for dental hygiene care and, specifically, clinical interventions for patients.

So I don't believe for a minute that resistance to removal of the order requirement is based on concerns about public safety. It really is about two things: It's about the exercise of power of one profession over another—it's about maintaining control—and it's about money. It's about revenues. It's as simple as that.

The essence of the order requirement is that it ties dental hygienists to employment by dentists. It ties the delivery of the service to conventional dental clinics and,

as I have said, it's about securing for dentists the revenue stream that dental hygienists generate. Because of the order requirement, charges for all hygiene services in Ontario are made by dentists, pursuant to the fee guide of the Ontario Dental Association.

This is a really important consideration for all of our constituents, but in particular for those who do not have extended health benefits and who cannot afford to pay for themselves. Dr Pran Manga of the University of Ottawa calculated that teeth cleaning and other routine oral hygiene services could be provided at up to 40% less. Think: 40% less cost if that order is removed. Why would we reject an initiative that stands to save our health care system, quite frankly, millions of dollars annually? Why would we even consider rejecting something that actually would provide service for the poor and vulnerable, whose numbers, we know, are increasing? Children of poor families do not have the access to dentists. They don't get their teeth examined any more in school, and they're not getting good oral hygiene.

I believe the other piece of information that's critical is that when you look in the latest study out of the United States, in long-term health care facilities the fact that there isn't good oral hygiene is contributing to significant health issues that needn't occur. So we know that this can make a difference.

In closing, I reiterate my support for Bill 116, and I urge my colleagues on this side of the House to support this bill, because it really benefits everybody in Ontario.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I am pleased to rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 116. It's an area that politicians are often loath to venture into, and that's the area of scope of practice, particularly when it comes to health care professionals. I am very pleased to see politicians here in the assembly today coming forward and arguing to move ahead with Bill 116, which I certainly support.

I want to commend my colleague too, the member for Whitby-Ajax: certainly as an MPP, as a minister, as Deputy Premier and as a leadership candidate for the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, a man who's not afraid to tell you where he stands and who brings forward brave initiatives. It's certainly within his character to bring forward Bill 116 here today.

I think that, as a principle, one should err on the side of consumer choice. Of course, when it comes to health care issues, we need to ensure that consumers have the proper information and that they're protected by adequate training and precautions. Certainly, in this case I believe that does exist. Dental hygienists go through extensive training. I understand some 700 hours of clinical experience is part of their training, covering scaling, root planing and oral prophylaxis, among other training initiatives—700 hours per dental hygienist coming out of school.

On top of that, you have the College of Dental Hygienists, which has appointees from the dental hygienists themselves as well as public appointees to make sure that the standards of care, quality of care and

training exist, and proper disciplinary proceedings if that fails. I would say that, all in all, the college system of health professionals in the province of Ontario is generally functioning quite well, and I'm confident, in this case, functioning very well.

Third, we have the Health Professionals Regulatory Advisory Council—HPRAC—one of the more esteemed bodies in the province of Ontario, which takes its time and very carefully, very cautiously reviews areas of medical practice. HPRAC has intervened in this matter on a couple of occasions. In fact, as some speakers have already said, this issue goes back more than a decade to some mediation the Ministry of Health conducted, I believe in 1993-94, to try to find a solution. That was not successful. Then HPRAC reviewed the matter and reported back in September 1995 and once again in May 1996: a very careful, well-thought-out review in the area of scope of practice, both times affirming that changes to the act like Bill 116 should take place.

While this issue has been around a long time and has been reviewed on several occasions, unfortunately the act has not moved forward until today. I am pleased to see it in the Legislative Assembly. I will be supporting it and I look forward to it carrying at third reading.

I believe that in areas like long-term care and non-ambulatory residents from rural or remote areas, individuals who don't have private dental assistance will benefit from this type of consumer choice, protected by the College of Dental Hygienists and reviewed by HPRAC. I know I've received some calls from some dentists in my riding who oppose the legislation—Dr Zammit and Dr Southward were talking about it. I reviewed their suggestions and I appreciate their input. I've also heard from dental hygienists in my riding, Marie Lochhead and Susan Luchesi, an old classmate of mine, a great individual dedicated to her profession as a dental hygienist and a strong advocate for the hygienists, whom I found had compelling arguments to support this legislation.

It's about time to move ahead. It has been given due consideration. I'm very proud to stand in my place and say, let's move forward. I'll be voting for the legislation.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand up today and indicate my support of Bill 116. I have also had an opportunity to speak to dental hygienists in my own community and hear from them about what change they hope to see in their profession. I think it is important we acknowledge that this is a profession, and that this bill, at its heart, is about increasing accessibility to a health provider who is a professional for those in our community who live in a long-term-care facility, or are not able to get to a doctor, or are non-ambulatory or are affected by cost consequences. We've learned over the years that making sure Ontarians are healthy by looking at a preventive approach is the best mechanism to ensure the health and safety of those individuals in our province.

I know others have spoken about the fact that this is perhaps a long time in coming and that there has been a lot of debate, not in this Legislature necessarily, but an

examination of this issue. I thought it would be helpful to look at the recommendation HPRAC brought forward in October 1995. After an 18-month review, HPRAC recommended the following:

"The Dental Hygiene Act, 1991, should be amended to allow dental hygienists to perform their authorized acts of scaling teeth and root planing including (incidental) curetting of surrounding tissue without an order, subject to appropriate conditions in regulations and standards. The regulations must clearly limit initiation of the procedures by dental hygienists to patients where there are no contra-indications or uncertainty as to whether it is safe to proceed. The regulations and standards of practice governing the limitations and expectations relating to initiation should be established through consultation with other professionals, particularly dentists and physicians, before the act is amended."

I agree with my colleague across the House that this is the type of debate that is appropriately done at a committee level. We can bring those experts forward and talk about the concrete details of how this could move forward. At its heart, it is about ensuring that all of us work together in this Legislature to the benefit of those in our community.

I know that at times what we're talking about might seem very technical, but I think it is about making sure we have increased access to dental hygiene services in this province, so that those individuals who do not currently have access have the choice to locate a professional practitioner to ensure they have the care they need in terms of their oral hygiene and oral health.

I'm one of those individuals who loves getting my teeth cleaned. I really am one of those people who do like going to the dentist and getting my teeth cleaned. I've had an opportunity to speak to the dental hygienists about this, and to think about the fact that there are many individuals, in particular seniors in the community, whom I meet who simply don't have that opportunity to attend a professional and get the help they need.

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Although I support Bill 116, we have some more work to do; there is no doubt about it. There is more work to do to ensure that protections are put in place, but it is important to acknowledge, as my friend across the House indicated, that the profession itself has been doing some of that work over the years, to establish standards of practice. The Ontario dental hygienists have demonstrated that professionalism coming forward. They have restrictions on how they would seek to operate, and you need only speak to the dental hygienists—I know some of them are here with us today—about why they want to see this change, and you see in their eyes and in their voices the passion, the desire to help and to care for those individuals in this province.

They really bring forward that initiative of being caregivers in all our communities, and it is their goal to make sure that Ontarians who need it the most, frankly, have access to that care so we can prevent more serious medical problems from arising, those that arise when you

are not able to sufficiently take care of the issues you need.

I had a chance to speak to my mom about this issue last night. We were talking about the fact that it was imperative. On January 7, I will be going to Edmonton to my grandmother's 100th-birthday party. It has been important over the years that those issues—she's living in a long-term care facility, has lived in a small rural community, did not have access to a dentist, did not have access to those types of services. It has been a health detriment over the years; there's no doubt about that.

That's what we're talking about today: making sure that we make those services available. It's been important to me in making my determination on why I supported this to know that organizations have the same goals in mind, like the Good Shepherd Centre, like some of the many organizations in our province that do good work on all of our behalf every day, making sure those citizens in each of our communities are cared for and looked after in their time of need. Groups like the Alzheimer Society, the ALS Society, the Good Shepherd, the Ontario seniors coalition, are all strong supporters of this bill. It's important to ensure that from their perspective, they're supportive, because they want to ensure that oral hygiene doesn't lead to morbidity among those who are vulnerable.

If there is something we can be proud of today, it's that everyone across this House is coming together, I hope, in a unified front to support those across Ontario who are vulnerable. As a result I am very proud to stand in support of Bill 116.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

I'm very pleased to join in the debate on Bill 116, brought forth by my colleague from Whitby-Ajax who has done a lot of work on this. The essence of the bill has been bantered back and forth for over a decade now, since the Ontario health act early in the 1990s gave dental hygienists their own college and permitted self-regulation. What we're seeing here today is not something new in terms of different professions trying to get established, which the dental hygienists have accomplished, but moving to also provide service and to serve the public in the best way that serves that profession.

Both sides, as we've heard already, the Ontario Dental Hygienists's Association and also the Ontario Dental Association have made points on this issue. There are obvious self-interest aspects from both the dentists and the dental hygienists, to be quite frank about it. I think what it comes down to, as I think the member from Erie-Lincoln and the member for Whitby-Ajax have stated, is what is best for the population in terms of cost, health and safety. I think those are a number of areas that have been addressed by both sides as we go through this.

In terms of cost, the position of the dental hygienists is that they can provide the treatment more cost-effectively, and that's certainly something that has to be looked at because dentists, when you talk to them, look at the use of a dental hygienist, as they state their position, as sort of a loss leader, which often doesn't generate much

income after all the expenses: rent, equipment and staff. They put their position forth, saying, "If that's the case, how can a dental hygienist do it for less?" But I don't think that's essentially the point in terms of what we're looking at here, in terms of serving of the public, in terms of the costs that they pay.

The argument of greater access to care by the dental hygienists is certainly a valid point; however, we have to focus on the areas where they're trying to provide this access, and usually it's the sick and the elderly. That's the focus, as we move through this, in terms of making sure there is greater access to care to the broadest sector of the population that there possibly can be.

Dental hygienists are well trained to do what they do. They usually have a one- or two-year course straight out of high school, and this includes all the additional science and physiology requirements. Certainly in the training aspect, there really isn't an issue. I think what's at issue is what we face with respect to CGAs, CAs and different groups that want to become self-regulated, like the acupuncturists and some other groups that are trying to move into an area that is provided through doctors. It is an area that you have to look at in terms of, what's the best way to provide that service?

I think this bill has to go forward. The member from Whitby-Ajax has put a lot of work into this. We've heard all the sides. I think we have to go to committee hearings and hear the arguments from the public and see what is best, so we can get the facts. I think that's what is important, because we certainly have positions from the Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association and from the Ontario Dental Association, but we have to hear the facts.

We also have to look at the fact that the Liberal government, during the election, made a promise with respect to dealing with the recommendations from the HPRAC regarding dental hygienists. They indicated that they are committed to acting on those recommendations, but you have to look at it in perspective. Now that they've promised that, really, what is the chance of that promise coming through? Because they have broken every other promise. What's happening here is that you have the member from Whitby-Ajax, a committed member, who has brought it forth. It's the loyal opposition that has brought this bill forth, not the Liberal government, who promised they would deal with this. At the end of the day, this is an issue that we have to join together on.

I have received input from Dr Chris Cottle from the city of Barrie, who works in this area and is on the Ontario Dental Association as a representative. I've also heard from Melanie Doyle, from the Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association, who is also from my riding of Barrie. I appreciate their input and I look forward to this bill receiving the merit that it deserves.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise to speak in support of Bill 116, the amendment to the Dental Hygiene Act of 1991. It's an amendment to change the needs that exist presently in our society, where the dental hygienists have to get an order from a dentist before they

can perform the work that they have been trained to do, that fits within their scope of practice.

I think it's very important, particularly representing a part of rural Ontario where a lot of services are not as available as they might be, and dental services are no exception. When I look back, when I came to this area that I now represent, the only time that my family went to have their teeth looked at was when the child would start to cry because they had a toothache. Nine times out of 10, when we finally got to the dentist, the dentist would have to pull that tooth out.

I want to welcome the dental hygienists who are here today.

I go back quite a way, and at that time, I don't expect there were many dental hygienists in existence. I'm an old person.

Today, when I go to the dentist—and incidentally, it's in the same town. It's not quite in the same building, but close to the same building that I went to as a child. When I go there now, my children go into the office next to the one that I go into, where the dental hygienist is doing everything that's required for my children. Incidentally, they do a very good job.

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When I asked my dentist about how the association works, he said, "It works very well." Obviously, he looks after the dental needs and the dental hygienist next door does a very good job of maintaining the quality and condition of my children's teeth. I said, "There's a bill coming forward that talks about removing the need for the order that you have to give and that the dental hygienist has to work with you on. What's your position on that?" He said, "I guess for us here it makes absolutely no difference. Obviously, she's doing her work and we're doing ours." There's more than one dentist in that office and everybody is doing their thing.

Obviously, we have a need for the dental hygienist in other places where they don't have a dentist available, such as long-term-care facilities. That was mentioned by the member from Whitby-Ajax. In rural Ontario, transportation is a major problem. We don't have transit and so forth, so if the disabled don't have the ability to drive or someone to drive them, they can't get to these services. The dental hygienists are prepared and, in many cases, are already doing it with an order from a dentist, looking after the needs of these people.

I think that really brings out the point of the need for the order. It seems to me that if it's a formality that a dentist must sign an order, and then I can take this piece of paper and as a dental hygienist I can travel around and provide services to homes for the aged and to disabled people, I really don't see the need for that order if the dentist is never going to be able to supervise the work anyway. After doing research, I found out what the dental hygienist is doing; in fact, they are better qualified and have had more training in doing that than the average dentist. So I don't know why the dentist should have to give an order that he will not follow up on just to allow the dental hygienist to do what it is they're trained to do.

I think it's a very good bill to bring forward, to let the experts, shall we say, perform in their field. I don't believe anybody in Ontario is well served by suggesting that one group of individuals should be able to control another group of experts in doing their duty. But more than that, they not only control or give the order, they also end up taking a payment for doing that. I don't think it's appropriate, where one person—I guess the right word is—lives off the avails of another's labour. They have absolutely—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): That's one way of putting it.

Mr Hardeman: Oh, some of the members in the Legislature are taking more from that statement than was meant, I'm sure.

It comes down to the ability of some of our people to pay for the services they require. It's a proven fact that the dental hygienist can perform this service more economically and effectively for my community if it's not done through the dentist's office, if they can set up a practice to provide that service in my community, where, incidentally, dental services are not as prevalent as they are in some other areas of the province. They're very hard to access, very hard to get to, and indeed may be not quite as available as they are in the big cities.

I strongly support this bill, and from listening to the debate this morning, I'm sure it will pass unanimously, as I've heard absolutely no one speak against it. For the dental hygienists who are here today, I want to say I proudly support this bill and will be voting that way.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Whitby-Ajax has two minutes.

Mr Flaherty: I want to thank all of the members who spoke here this morning, in the last hour, most of whom have made reference to the important issue here, which is increased access to dental health, to oral hygiene, to health care in the province. To the member for Kenora-Rainy River; the member for Etobicoke Centre, who also has Bill 91 standing in her name, to the same effect as Bill 116; and the members for Erie-Lincoln, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and Oxford, my thanks to all of them for speaking in support of the bill.

Two points: Bill 91 is standing in this place. The member for Etobicoke Centre has spoken eloquently in support of the concept that we should increase access to oral hygiene in the province of Ontario. I thank the member. She's correct, we don't agree on everything, but there are issues that affect access to health care in Ontario with respect to which I am sure the member for Etobicoke Centre and I agree, like this issue, and to which many members of this House agree.

It is a good day in this place, Speaker, I'm sure you'd agree, when members of all three parties can rise above partisan concerns, look at an issue that affects a broad group of people in Ontario and come together and support a bill that is not a long bill. It's a short bill but it deals with a specific issue. The result of the bill eventually becoming law in Ontario, which I hope it does, will be to increase access to health care for many of our constituents in rural Ontario, but also in other part of

the province, certainly; for all our constituents who have transportation issues, particularly the vulnerable people in Ontario, including elderly people.

For all those reasons, I thank my friends who spoke in support of the bill and I look forward to its passing.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for private members' public business has expired.

SENIOR CITIZENS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We shall deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mr Sergio.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

DENTAL HYGIENE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1991 SUR LES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 44, standing in the name of Mr Flaherty.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this is referred to the—

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): The standing committee on public accounts.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Flaherty has asked that it be referred to the standing committee on public accounts. Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1330.

VISITOR

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to welcome to the House the Right Honourable John Turner, the former Prime Minister.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Welcome, Prime Minister.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHARITY HOCKEY GAME

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my legislative colleagues for their participation and support in the fourth annual charity hockey challenge.

On Monday last at Oshawa's Civic Auditorium, I was pleased to host a hockey challenge between the Queen's

Park Legiskaters and the Durham Regional Police. All proceeds of this game went toward minor hockey teams in Oshawa. This year's event presented a unique opportunity for the public, as hockey's most cherished trophy, the Stanley Cup, was on hand for viewing, picture-taking and touching just for luck.

I'd like to praise the Hockey Hall of Fame and its employees, especially Mike Boltz and Phil Pritchard, the guys who wear the white gloves, for their hard work, dedication and care in bringing the cup to Oshawa.

I'd also like to pay special thanks to the members who made up the Legiskaters team: the members from Pembroke-Nipissing-Renfrew, Scarborough Centre, Durham, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mississauga West and our outstanding coach, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who organized the members and the security staff from Queen's Park; also, the city of Oshawa's Mayor Gray, along with city council members. Without the years of experience that come along with the Civic Auditorium management and staff and all the volunteers, including the Oshawa firefighters, my staff and my father, the evening could not have run as smoothly as it did. To them, a big special thanks. I'd also like to express my gratitude to the Durham Regional Police, Chief McAlpine and organizer Sergeant Ross for their sportsmanlike conduct on and off the ice.

Over 1,500 excited fans turned out for the event. More importantly, up to \$20,000 was raised in support of the NASC, CYO, OCHL, Oshawa Girls' Hockey and Oshawa Minor Hockey.

It's all about kids and hockey, as showcased in the kids' mini game between periods, which ended up in a 0-0 tie. Thanks to all, and remember: Never mind the luck; give it your best and the luck will take care of itself.

POVERTY

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): Today we've been visiting with students from McMaster University who joined us to talk about some of the issues in my city. They're studying the inadequacy of the government's personal needs allowance for people who live in residential care facilities. It's \$112 a month. I think it's pathetic to expect that anyone could survive on that amount, let alone change the circumstances they are in. Imagine trying to survive yourself on \$4 a day, not just for one day or two, but every single day of your life. That's the reality of the grinding poverty that 95,000 residents experience every day in Hamilton.

The McMaster students have studied the issue in depth and have come up with practical steps the government can take right now: for example, raise the allocation to \$160 a month and index allowances to keep them at pace with inflation; make Ontario minimum wage a living wage right away; ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are looked after and have the dignity that comes with having adequate means to purchase basic items like a newspaper, a cup of coffee and bus fare. The minister's pitiful \$2-a-month increase doesn't cut it at all.

I rise in support of the McMaster students, who have studied the punishing effects of poverty on residents in special-care homes. We should ensure that these residents have the dignity of an adequate allowance so they don't have to become career panhandlers or face being shunned and ostracized by others.

I know the Minister of Community and Social Services also met with the McMaster students today. I urge the minister to please follow through on the government's promise and take meaningful action on poverty for the health and well-being of the city of Hamilton and the province as a whole.

DIABETES

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): On November 26, 2004, at the Pearson Convention Centre, the Young Liberals in Brampton came together to hold the first-ever Dinner for Diabetes fundraiser. The event was a huge success, as a crowd of 300 people attended the event. It is a proud testament to the youth of Brampton that they were able to raise more than \$10,000 for the Canadian Diabetes Association during Diabetes Awareness Month. I, along with my fellow Brampton MPP colleagues the Minister of Health and the Minister of Transportation, was privileged to partake in this important and significant event.

As I'm sure you know, diabetes is a chronic disease that cannot be cured but can only be prevented or managed. Today, over 700,000 Ontarians live with diabetes and an estimated 300,000 Ontarians do not know that they have diabetes. The high-risk group includes those who are of Aboriginal, Hispanic, Asian, South Asian or African descent.

The vice-president of research and education for the Canadian Diabetes Association, Donna Lillie, praised the commitment of the youth of Brampton in bringing awareness to this deadly disease. The Canadian Diabetes Association helps to ensure that Canadians are well informed about this deadly disease through diabetes research, education and service. With a commitment from those in the community, such as the Dinner for Diabetes fundraiser, and from all of levels of government, we will be able to manage and ultimately cure diabetes.

HIGHWAY 7

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Once again, I am rising in this House to insist that the provincial government take appropriate action to fast-track the construction of the new four-lane Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph. This much-needed project, which has been talked about and studied for a generation, is currently undergoing further study and public consultation involving environmental issues. While we're all concerned about the environmental impact of major projects, the Ministry of the Environment must not allow the Highway 7 job to become bogged down in unnecessary bureaucratic delay. We need a new Highway

7 for reasons of safety and the efficient movement of goods and people through and within our growing and dynamic communities in Waterloo region and Wellington county.

For almost two years now I have been calling upon successive provincial governments to prioritize the projects in the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan, including the new Highway 7. The project ideas come from the municipal councils of the communities I'm privileged to represent. They have the support of many hundreds of our residents who have signed petitions which I continue to present to this House.

A few days ago I was pleased to attend a meeting with the Ministers of Transportation and Public Infrastructure Renewal, along with Waterloo regional chair Ken Seiling, Kitchener mayor Carl Zehr, Woolwich township mayor Bill Strauss, Guelph mayor Kate Quarrie, and Guelph/Eramosa township mayor Clint Martin. Our elected community leaders made a compelling case that this project needs to continue to move forward. And in a recent editorial headline, the Guelph Mercury said, "Time to Approve a New Highway 7." No one in this House could have said it better.

VISITORS

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I stand today to say that this morning the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation had their first meeting of the advisory council on the trails strategy of Ontario, and I would like the House to recognize four people sitting in the gallery who have assisted us with this: Mr John Marsh, John Broderick, Sandra Hanson and Patrick Connor. Thank you very much for coming to Queen's Park to assist us with this process.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It is not a point of order.

PENSION PLANS

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): At the end of the last session of the Legislature in June, I rose in this House to ask the members gathered here to keep in mind some of my constituents. I'm speaking of the retired workers, both unionized and salary, of Stelco. For roughly the last year, they've been living with tremendous uncertainty as their former employer, Stelco, has been undergoing restructuring under court protection, courtesy of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.

Right now, the steel market is healthy—we could even say it is robust—and the bidding war for Stelco is now in high gear. Justice James Farley has reminded the companies involved that in their zeal to cut a good deal and cash in on the booming steel market, the pensioners—the men and women who spent their lives working for that company and in good faith deferred their wages in the form of pension considerations—should not only be remembered but be given priority in this deal and, might I add, in any future deals.

While this government recognizes its role in helping to protect the pensioners, we can all agree it should not be the job of taxpayers of this province, this country or any other country to fulfill the obligations and responsibilities of profit-making companies, especially the obligations to human beings and their families who contribute so much to the success of those companies. As the future of Stelco seems now to be bright, so too should the futures of the workers, especially the pensioners who have been watching helplessly from the sidelines.

I'm proud to know that the Premier and his staff, the Minister of Economic Development, the Minister of Labour, as well as our area minister and MPPs, have all been taking this issue very seriously, and will continue to do so.

1340

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Later this afternoon, I'll be introducing a private member's bill which will help ease the very real financial pressures Ontario families face as a result of the McGuinty government. In early 2004, the Liberal government amended regulations under the Ontario Health Insurance Act. Sadly, and without consultation, this government announced the delisting of routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy care. This is causing undue pressure on the hard-working Ontario resident who now must pay out of pocket for these important services. Clearly, Ontarians are paying more for their health care and receiving less. The Premier made almost 40 promises on health care during the last election; we now see his promises mean nothing.

December 1 marks the first day in which citizens are going to be forced to pay 100% of the cost of these services. This is simply wrong. Approximately 600,000 chiropractic patients signed petitions and letters asking the Premier not to delist chiropractic funding. This demonstrates the importance of chiropractic care in Ontario. Indeed, I might say that in Scugog, in my riding, is the home of Dr Daniel Palmer, who is considered the founder of chiropractic care.

My private member's bill is entitled An Act to amend the Income Tax Act with respect to tax credits for medical expenses. Last October, the Premier asked Ontarians to choose change. He promised a radically different Ontario and improved quality of life. Well, none of this has happened. Thanks to this government, change is all that is left in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians.

TAMIL CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to take this opportunity to inform the Legislature of an inspiring evening I shared with a number of Tamil young people at the Canadian Tamil Youth Development Centre Awards of Excellence 2004, held at the University of Toronto on October 30. The Canadian Tamil Youth

Development Centre was hosting their sixth annual awards ceremony acknowledging the incredible talent and achievement of young Tamils in our community.

Allow me to congratulate these fine young people for putting forward the positive side of our youth. Too many people focus on the negative and tar all of our young people with the same brush. When the majority of young people have so much potential, there's no question our future will be in good hands.

Allow me to congratulate the award winners that evening. Their accomplishments are impressive. Their talent was on display throughout the evening.

The Tamil community has quickly become an important part of life in our community. They are a growing community. They are a flourishing community. They're a community that is quickly adapting to the Canadian way of life. Tamil small businesses are popping every everywhere. This community is having an incredibly valuable impact on our local economy.

I'm delighted to congratulate these young people today for their achievements. I congratulate our local Tamil community on their accomplishments and entrepreneurial spirit. These young people are proud of their Tamil heritage and proud to be Canadians. They are truly inspiring to us all.

EVENTS IN NIPISSING

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Christmas came to Nipissing this past weekend. On Friday evening, the mayor of North Bay, councillors, Santa and Mrs Claus and I made our way down Main Street to officially light the downtown Christmas tree and start the downtown Christmas walk. Thousand of North Bayites came out Friday evening to stroll down Main Street, enjoy carollers and musicians and the hospitality of our downtown merchants. Hundreds of people joined my staff and me in our office for hot chocolate and treats. Our thanks go to the downtown improvement area staff and volunteers, as well as the parks and recreation staff and the various merchants for a really beautiful evening.

On Saturday, the volunteers at the Callandar library organized a fabulous Celtic holiday house tour, where over 400 people in the community of Callandar toured five beautifully decorated homes and enjoyed homemade scones and tea and Sandy Peden's famous shortbread.

Saturday night, Mayor Brazeau of Callandar and I, along with councillors and Mayor Billingsley from Nipissing and a few hundred residents, lit up the waterfront in Callandar and enjoyed listening to the students of MT Davidson school sing from their Christmas pageant. Thank you to the Callandar library volunteers, the merchants, the rec committee and the volunteers who created such a beautiful evening and day in Callandar.

Finally, on Sunday in Mattawa, the parents, teachers and students at St Victor's hosted a Christmas tea and bake sale while the volunteer firefighters organized a wonderful Christmas parade, which began at the Algonquin long-term care home, where many of the residents were able to enjoy the parade.

I'd like to thank Butch Belanger, the firefighters and the volunteers who made the parade such a success, and I'd like to thank all of those people who are building our communities in Nipissing.

HIGHWAY NOISE BARRIERS

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I rise this afternoon on behalf of the residents of Etobicoke Centre to say thank you to Minister Takhar and to the Ministry of Transportation for our new barrier that's going to be erected along Highway 427. Now, while I know that that's not of particular interest to a lot of people, I can assure you that it is to the folks who bought their homes some 40 or 50 years ago, who now have over 400,000 cars that go by their homes each and every day. The noise is a significant challenge for these folks as they get older and wish to stay in their homes.

JOHN TURNER

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I also would like to take a moment to say thank you to the Honourable John Turner. I'd like to be able to say thank you for 25 years of contribution to the political scene in Canada and for his continued, sustainable contribution to people such as myself, whom he's chosen to help and mentor as I learn this whole new process called politics at the provincial level. It's something you can't do on your own. You really do need the helping friend that you can turn to for some good, sage advice, somebody who's been there, done that and turned all those corners, as it were. I have a great deal of respect for this gentleman, and in particular for the fact that he is my friend. I thank you, sir.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I beg leave to present a report on curriculum development and implementation from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: In 1996, the Ministry of Education undertook the development of the first province-wide curriculum. Elementary curriculum policy documents were introduced in 1997 and 1998. The new secondary curriculum was introduced one grade at a time, beginning with grade 9 in 1999 and ending with grade 12 in 2002. The committee examined the first value-for-money audit of this program area since the development and implementation of the new curriculum.

In its report, the committee made seven recommendations. Among them are two that refer to at-risk students. The ministry has been asked to report on the actions it has taken to create more effective pathways for these students, including increasing the number of locally developed courses that qualify for compulsory credit and to provide information on the impact of its programs for at-risk students. The committee also recommended that the ministry report on the results of its research regarding social promotion and remediation.

This completes the committee's work on the 2003 annual report of the auditor. The committee held nine hearings in February 2004. Following these hearings, the committee has submitted unanimous reports on each of those hearings. The tabling of these reports has completed the cycle that we are in.

I'd like to thank the members of the standing committee on public accounts, who include Laurel Broten, Jim Flaherty, Shelley Martel, Bill Mauro, Julia Munro, Richard Patten, Liz Sandals and David Zimmer. I would like to thank them as their Chair.

I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising /
Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: All in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Speaker: All those against please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Cameron
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act /
Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): No.

The Speaker: Carried.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mr Speaker, when there's a no, you call for "all in favour" and "all opposed."

The Speaker: Order. If you are paying attention, when I ask for it, I would like to hear it very clearly. I will ask again.

Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

MEMBER FOR TIMISKAMING-COCHRANE

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: All members of the House will want to join me in congratulating the newest grandfather in the House. This individual became a grandfather to a grandson called Isaac, and I'm of course talking about our friend the Minister of Natural Resources.

PRESS GALLERY CHARITY AUCTION

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): On a point of order and information, Mr Speaker: I know you and all members of the House

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kennedy, Gerard
Kular, Kuldip
Marsales, Judy
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Peters, Steve
Peterson, Tim
Phillips, Gerry

Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

would want to know that the press gallery charity auction last night raised \$33,700, surpassing last year's total of \$25,000. They want to thank everyone possible. That message comes from his honour Badger Brennan.

1400

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT (MEDICAL EXPENSE TAX CREDIT), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI DE L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR FRAIS MÉDICAUX)

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act with respect to the tax credit for medical expenses / Projet de loi 154, Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu à l'égard du crédit d'impôt pour frais médicaux.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr O'Toole.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Everyone in Ontario recalls the Liberal government's first budget. They introduced the dreaded health tax. Next came the review of the Health Insurance Act, where they delisted physiotherapy, optometry and chiropractic, this without consultation. The delisting of these essential medical services is simply wrong. The people of Ontario are paying more and receiving less. I ask for support for this bill for the people of Ontario.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY AND SUPPORT ARREARS ENFORCEMENT AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES OBLIGATIONS FAMILIALES ET L'EXÉCUTION DES ARRIÉRÉS D'ALIMENTS

Ms Pupatello moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 155, An Act to amend the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996 and to make consequential amendments to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 155, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les obligations familiales et l'exécution des arriérés d'aliments et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Pupatello.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I will save my remarks for ministerial statements.

TRILLIUM GIFT OF LIFE NETWORK AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE RÉSEAU TRILLIUM POUR LE DON DE VIE

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to amend the Trillium Gift of Life Network Act / Projet de loi 156, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur le Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Kormos.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill will save thousands of lives. The purpose of the bill is to ensure that upon the death of a person, tissue from the person's body may be removed and made available for transplant into another person's body, and that this may be done without the consent of the person from whom the tissue is removed.

Currently, the act requires that consent be obtained before tissue can be removed from a human body. Under the proposed amendments, consent is no longer required, but a person may object to the removal of the tissue prior to his or her death, or a substitute may object on his or her behalf after the death has occurred. If an objection is made, no tissue shall be removed from the body. Part II of the act sets out the manner and circumstances in which an objection may be made by or on behalf of a person.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network continues in its role as planner, promoter and coordinator of activities relating to the donation, removal and use of tissue for transplant and for other uses. Obligations are placed on hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities designated under the act to notify the network when a person dies, or if death is imminent.

The network coordinates the provision of information to the patient, or his or her family, with respect to the removal of tissue and the person's right to object. An individual may register with the network its objection to the removal and use of tissue from his or her body after his or her death. The network shall establish and maintain a registry of such objections.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I rise today to inform the House that this government is taking further action to increase enforcement, improve fairness and enhance efficiency at the Family Responsibility Office. I know we're all pleased to hear about this today.

One of my first actions as Minister of Community and Social Services was to visit the Family Responsibility

Office. I was struck by the Industrial Revolution type of assembly line systems that they had to employ just to do their jobs. I also participated in round tables in my own hometown, in Ottawa and in Niagara Falls. Many of our members in this House also had their own round tables to help us, to give us advice on the priority areas that we needed to address with this office.

During those consultations, they told us that it was important for government to help families and to move quickly to help people get the money they were entitled to. When this government took office, there had been virtually no improvements made to FRO, even though for years the Ontario Ombudsman, the Privacy Commissioner and the Provincial Auditor all had been warning that changes were needed. We listened, and that is why in February our government took action to help families get the support they are entitled to.

It was a plan for the Family Responsibility Office that moved forward in three significant ways: making immediate improvements on customer service, laying the foundation for significant long-term changes in the way the Family Responsibility Office works, and launching a series of consultations across the province. Our government also committed \$40 million over four years for a new case management system with supporting technology to help transform FRO and to help track down and collect support payments that are in arrears.

I am very proud to report to the Legislature that since our last announcement, more than \$64 million has been collected as a result of our credit bureau initiative. There has been a 35% increase in the number of phone calls that the Family Responsibility Office fields every day. The average wait time on the customer service line is now half of what it was last February. The Family Responsibility Office has tracked down addresses for almost half of all the returned mail, and we've added staff to the office that faces a steadily growing number of files.

If I may, I have to congratulate the staff, our public service, who work at the FRO office, because they've worked very hard to help us with a tremendous number of changes, and they do so because they know that they are helping people who need their intervention and help. Congratulations to the people at FRO. You are doing a tremendous job for us.

While we're proud of our accomplishments, we must continue to show leadership in helping families get the support they need. That's why we have a plan to further improve the office. Our plan would increase enforcement by: providing the Family Responsibility Office with stronger trace-and-locate measures by expanding the number of organizations from which they can demand information to include trade unions, among others; extending the maximum jail term for defaulting parents who fail to comply with court orders from 90 to 180 days; reporting the defaulting payers to professional licensing bodies; allowing the Family Responsibility Office to obtain a financial statement from a third party that is linked to the payer, should they be trying to hide

their assets; and giving us the authority to post on a Web site those that we can't find, a measure that we will take if we need to.

Our plan would improve fairness by giving our staff the flexibility to cease enforcement and enforce a lesser amount, dependent on that case. Our plan would enhance efficiency by allowing people who owe money to send payments to the office electronically.

The proposed legislative amendments are the first substantive changes that the act has seen in almost eight years. They're long overdue.

We know that most parents are responsible and pay their child support payments. Two thirds are in full or partial compliance. But that means there is another one third out there whom we need to be very concerned about. Today we're telling those who don't live up to their family responsibilities that it's time to pay up. We cannot allow defaulting parents to continue to force their families into poverty.

1410

Our government is the first to show leadership in helping families get the support they deserve. We know there is much more work still to be done, and we will get there. We intend to make Ontario a leader in enforcing support payments. Our government plans to use aggressive means so that we have the tools we need to go after people who aren't paying what the courts have ruled they ought to pay. In Ontario, parents who should be paying support will pay support. I call upon all members of this House to support these progressive measures, these fair measures that would help make our families stronger, our communities stronger and ultimately the province of Ontario stronger.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'm pleased to respond on behalf of my caucus with respect to the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Amendment Act, which was tabled by the minister today. As one who has seen the evolution of support order and custody legislation in this province over the last 20 years, I'm mindful that in the late 1980s, when we saw the first legislation in our province, enforcement components were not supported by the then Attorney General of the day, Ian Scott. We have come, indeed, a long way over the course of the last 20 years, so that meaningful enforcement can occur when, as all members in this House will agree, it is extremely important that we support those families who rely on their support payments from a parent who is no longer living with them. For that reason our party will very definitely want to work with this legislation and offer some constructive comments as well as participate in committee in terms of making amendments to it.

We do have some concerns, and I'm pleased to see the minister has taken a decidedly different tack, now that she is a minister, with these matters.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): She's changed.

Mr Jackson: Well, you know, the rhetoric in opposition sometimes gets retailored when you make the trip across the floor and become the government responsible.

I have some questions for the minister today. First of all, the minister has indicated that the minimum sentences would be moved from 90 to 180 days. It begs the question of just how frequently this is being used in our courts, what average time of stay in a correction facility was called upon. I find it passing strange that we are not creating more of a maximum environment for these enforcements, but minimum levels.

The one that concerns me the most is that you're going to bring—a very rare time in Canadian justice: You are saying that early-release provisions for persons in default will not apply. Now, I want to bring to the House's attention that just last Friday, in this province, a known child sex offender who secured his prey through the Internet was released in an Ontario court, by a provincially appointed judge, and was given triple time off for early release. This is a known pedophile who sexually assaulted a child, and yet we have no protections in our legislation at all in this province to say that that dangerous offender must stay behind bars for the full term. And yet, if your parent has been in arrears with their support payments, by God, we're going to lock them up for 180 days and they will have no chance of getting out early. It seems to me that this is an unusual application of the law, considering the fact that just this week the same case in Alberta resulted in a seven-year sentence for that pedophile and yet here in Ontario this individual is actually out of jail. So I want the member to realize that the use of that provision here should be considered very strongly in other legislation, and I'm surprised at where the priorities are.

The member opposite would be aware that her Attorney General is currently looking at paralegals in this province and their impact on the entire issue around support, custody and FRO matters, and that the Attorney General is looking at eliminating the use of paralegals in these matters. She would know that they are having a dramatic and positive impact on helping to clear the backlog and finding affordable, accessible access to our justice system when families find themselves in dispute on matters of custody and support payment.

The amount of write-offs that the treasurer of this province—an historic write-off of \$214 million owed to the province of Ontario. On one hand, you want to put people in jail for non-support payments, but your minister, a mere three seats away from you, has been routinely writing off the debts of individuals to the province of Ontario, who owe the money for the welfare payments that we as a province pay for their children.

Minister, thank you for the legislation. We look forward to working with you on providing positive amendments to improve it.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This isn't the first announcement of this sort that we've had occasion to listen to in this chamber. In fact, it has been eight years since the Conservative government, upon their election, dismantled the regional offices of the Family Respon-

sibility Office and created the chaos that prevails, even a year plus into the reign of this new McGuinty Liberal government in the province of Ontario, the government that promised change and, on a good day, delivers but spare change.

In fact, it has been just about eight years and a month or so plus since my colleague Shelley Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, conducted her early morning raid, her break and enter into the Family Responsibility Office to demonstrate the laxness of security. She came back, after that break and enter, with videotape demonstrating an office that was in complete chaos, floor after floor after floor—overflowing boxes of files there, ready for inspection by anybody who might pass by, whether they belonged in that building or not, be it at 7 in the morning or 7 in the evening.

The silliness of today's announcement is matched only by the superciliousness of previous announcements from similar ministers: "Reporting the defaulting payers to professional licensing bodies." See, this sounds, oh so profound. We're going to report these people. Well, big deal. So you're going to tell the law society that some lawyer hasn't been paying his or her child support. "Yeah? So?" Where does that get you? You're going to tell the College of Physicians and Surgeons that somebody isn't paying their child support. "Yeah? So?" Where does that get you? You're going to tell the local Lions Club, I suppose, or maybe the Kinsmen Club that one of their members is not paying his or her child support. "Yeah? So?" That doesn't put money into the account of what is usually the mother and her kids, who have been paying a huge price for the incompetence of this government and its ongoing mismanagement of the FRO.

Even more shocking is that this government would include in their announcement today that they are going to give staff flexibility to cease enforcement and to enforce a lesser amount. What bunkum. What hogwash. What this government is saying is that they're going to close files by simply washing their hands of that mom and her kids or that dad and his kids, as the case might be. In fact, the Tories tried that stunt and all hell broke loose amongst opposition benches, including from the Liberals.

It is outrageous that your response to your incompetent mismanagement of the Family Responsibility Office and your disdain for those moms—inevitably moms, but from time to time dads—and their kids is expressed in your acknowledgement today that you're going to wash your hands of so many of them by simply refusing to pursue those files, those collections, or by arbitrarily varying the amount. That's of little comfort to kids this season of the year who are not going to just go without gifts under the tree but will go without a tree during this Christmas season, during this holiday season, because this government can't get its act together around management of the Family Responsibility Office.

FRO complaints remain in the top three for our constituency offices, eclipsed only as a result of the misman-

agement by your colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services of the registry office up in Thunder Bay. And it isn't because FRO complaints have been reduced; it's because the concerns around the availability of birth certificates and other similar sorts of government documentation have ballooned, skyrocketed.

1420

This government has bought into the Tory theme of centralizing and destaffing this office. This government owes those custodial parents and their kids more than the same old Tory platitudes. This government owes those fathers—inevitably fathers, but from time to time moms—who are paying their support but whose support gets lost in the black hole of the FRO office up in north Toronto; far more than an effort to try to build some positive spin around a tragic and dismal situation.

I say to the minister, cut the crap. Get with it. Get food on those tables. Protect those kids. Don't treat this with scorn and disdain.

VISITORS

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am sure you would allow me to acknowledge the future politicians of Ontario seated above us here: Dr Stein and the political science students of the great McMaster University, alma mater of my colleague Mr McMeekin and our own Premier.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

Now we have a real point of order from the government House leader.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to revert to motions.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent to revert to motions? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that notwithstanding standing order 77(b), the orders for third reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising, and Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads, may be called today; and

That the time available for debate this afternoon, up to 5:50 pm, shall be divided into two equal parts, with the first part being allotted for debate on Bill 25 and the second part being allotted for debate on Bill 73; and

That each part shall be further divided and apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That when the time allotted for debate of both bills has expired, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of each bill; and

That any divisions required shall be deferred until Monday, December 6, 2004.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

DEFERRED VOTES

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 17, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act / Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1424 to 1429.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Racco, Mario G.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Broten, Laurel C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Sergio, Mario
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Peterson, Tim	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Marchese, Rosario
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I move that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: So ordered.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ACCESSIBILITÉ POUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 118, An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the Act for persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 118, Loi traitant de l'élaboration, de la mise en oeuvre et de l'application de normes concernant l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées en ce qui concerne les biens, les services, les installations, l'emploi, le logement, les bâtiments et toutes les autres choses qu'elle précise.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1432 to 1437.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Baird, John R.	Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hudak, Tim	Racco, Mario G.
Bisson, Gilles	Jackson, Cameron	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Runciman, Robert W.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kormos, Peter	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Churley, Marilyn	Marsales, Judy	Sterling, Norman W.
Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flaherty, Jim	O'Toole, John	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 72; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr Speaker, I ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker: So ordered.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have two unanimous consents. I just want to signal to

the opposition that the government will agree to the full hour for question period today, and I'd ask the table to give me the proper wording for the motion.

In any event, I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on the International Day of Disabled Persons.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on the International Day of Disabled Persons. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Tomorrow marks the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons. More than half a billion human beings have disabilities. No matter where they live in our world, they face physical barriers, social barriers, cultural barriers, technological barriers and that most daunting barrier of attitude. Hundreds of millions of people with disabilities around the globe face ignorance, neglect, superstition, fear and isolation.

The UN has called for all societies, all communities, to ensure that girls and boys and women and men with disabilities may exercise the same rights, responsibilities and obligations as others. These are fundamental principles of human dignity and freedom, matters of human rights and social justice, matters of empowerment and opportunity. The challenges before us in Ontario are the challenges before us in the world. The issues are clear. The needs are real. The potential is extraordinary.

In the past few weeks, members have debated the proposed new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004. The debate has brought home how very personal the issue of accessibility is for each of us—for all of us. I have listened as members on both sides of the chamber have spoken with deep passion and emotion about the challenges faced by their constituents, their families, their neighbours, their friends, their campaign workers, their loved ones. Everyone here knows the importance of full participation and equality for Ontarians with disabilities. We all know the issues: raising awareness; accessibility; knocking down barriers, both visible and invisible; support services; employment; safety; independence. And we all know the incredible benefits to be gained by all of us with the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of our political, social, economic and cultural life.

The theme of the 2004 UN observance is, "Nothing About Us Without Us." People with disabilities want us to listen to their wishes, their aspirations, their ideas, their dreams. People with disabilities want legislators to craft laws based on what they tell us is good for them, not what we tell them is good for them. That is what we have tried to do in bringing forward the new accessibility legislation. We have paid close attention to the desires of the disability community. Two of these advocates are here today. I'm pleased to welcome, on behalf of the Legislature, David Lepofsky and Patti Bregman.

We have incorporated the aims, objectives and concrete suggestions of the Ontarians with Disabilities

Act Committee. We have built upon the extremely solid foundation of work undertaken by Ontarians with disabilities over the past 10 years. More than 250 community groups have provided input to the proposed legislation. More than 1,000 individuals took part in regional meetings across the province. We had 14 round tables with persons with disabilities, and thousands of people have spoken with me to express their individual hopes, their practical suggestions and their unwavering determination to build a truly inclusive Ontario.

Ontarians with disabilities have brought home the need to address the full range of disabilities: physical, mental, sensory, developmental and learning disabilities. They have brought home the need to fully include the private sector, as well as the public sector, in the legislation. They have brought home the need for strong enforcement measures.

Most importantly, they have brought home the absolute imperative of enabling people with disabilities to be ongoing partners in shaping the laws that touch their lives—"Nothing About Us Without Us."

The real key to the proposed legislation is that it would make people with disabilities full partners in drafting and crafting the standards that would apply to the public sector and the private sector in the years to come. Ontarians with disabilities would be at the table when the t's are crossed and the i's are dotted on the rules respecting access to goods, services, buildings, accommodation and employment.

I want to re-emphasize my appreciation to all members of this House for their heartfelt and constructive comments on accessibility. I'm also gratified that the Legislature has approved this bill in principle, through the vote this afternoon, and that we may now move ahead to the committee stage. What a wonderful achievement on the eve of the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons.

We all want Ontario to be a leader in building a world of true inclusion. We all want to leave our children a society where everyone is free to make the most of their own potential. In the words of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "In these and other efforts, let us listen to disabled persons, not just on this day, but every day."

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I, too, would like to join all members of this House in acknowledging International Day of Disabled Persons and to lend my voice and that of my leader, John Tory, and our caucus in terms of our support for persons who are differently abled to cope with the daily rigors of life in our province.

At the outset, I want to put on the record again, as I do on most occasions, that the people of Ontario are fortunate to live in a jurisdiction that has provided some of the most outstanding leadership on this continent as it relates to the rights of individuals. Not only were we the very first to sign on to the declarations inherent with the national Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but we were also the first jurisdiction to bring in a human rights

commission and to strengthen that commission office with real power and real authority in our province.

I was pleased to be part of a government that participated in enhancing that mandate and the budget for our chief commissioner, who I'd like to publicly acknowledge today, the honourable Keith Norton and his associates and hard-working staff at the human rights commission. They have done much to focus attention, when the courts have sometimes failed and politicians have fallen short, in terms of understanding the needs of disabled persons.

It was just this week that commissioner Norton tabled a very significant piece of work that he'd been working on for over a year, in the opportunity to succeed in achieving barrier-free education for students with disabilities in Ontario. This is an incredibly important and powerful document, because this document is a guide to setting the very standards the minister has just spoken to, which she feels we need to negotiate over the next 20 years to achieve.

What I find interesting is that we clearly have now in place, from our chief commissioner in this province, an accountability, accessibility and accommodation plan for students to receive the benefits they are entitled to under the law in this province today. I know I have spoken with the Minister of Education on several occasions about those families who continue to have to go to the courts in our province to seek the benefits and the rights they currently enjoy in legislation that was supported by all members of this House.

Just recently I had a case of a family that, for the last two years, have been in court. They've been to two provincial tribunals. They've spent \$15,000 of their own money. They got a ruling from the Ontario special education tribunal ordering their school board to accommodate their disabled autistic son, the school board approved it, and now, next week, the board is considering a motion to rescind all of this—here in Ontario.

I know the Minister of Education is vitally concerned about the conduct of the Halton board of education in these matters, and I've spoken to him, and I encourage him to look into this case in more detail.

1450

It strikes me that one of the comments I have made to the minister about her new legislation—I commend her for providing a time frame, but I fundamentally don't believe that it should take the Ministry of Education of this province 20 years to become fully accessible. But it might take the private sector 15 or 20 years to do that.

I want to encourage the minister to consider amendments that will allow for various government agencies, as called for in the previous legislation, Bill 125—it talks about the fact that our provincial courts, for example, should be fully accessible within 10 years, and those budget monies were budgeted by the previous government. I want the minister to be aware that when I scanned the Web site for the accessibility plans that are called for in Bill 125, it's clearly indicated right here that the 15% increase was to be allocated to each and every recon-

struction or modification to a courthouse in Ontario; 15% was added to ensure that those courthouses and those changes to the physical environment would be to the code regulations and to the higher standard as set by the government. And right in the document it indicates that those plans have been rescinded.

I say to the minister, we need to work together on behalf of disabled people in this province, but the government can make this province more accessible a lot sooner than anyone else, and it's a challenge we should all work together on and achieve.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons is a very important day. On behalf of New Democrats, I'm very pleased to speak to it. I have observed over the years that unless you have a disability or you're affected by a particular disability, you do not spend too much time thinking about the problem or imagining what it must be like to live with a physical or mental disability. But as legislators it's our obligation to acknowledge, understand and imagine what those problems are and to deal with them.

The fact of the matter is, persons with disabilities number over 15% of our population. That's a huge number of people. We often don't believe that there could be so many facing these disabilities, but it's huge. They face numerous barriers, many of which we take for granted—barriers in getting access to and fully participating in important activities such as jobs, access to information, communication, education at all levels, public transit, access to a café, to a restaurant, to a movie theatre, the use of goods, services and facilities that the public usually enjoys.

Even though both the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code ban discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability in so many aspects of life, they have not been successful in effectively rooting out the old barriers or preventing the erection of new barriers. Lawsuits under these laws are costly, often very slow, and not always successful. Efforts to secure voluntary compliance over the years have not solved the problem.

The International Day of Disabled Persons helps us all to remember that we have a duty as legislators to break down those barriers. Such a day helps us to mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. Such a day helps us to mobilize support for full and equal enjoyment of human rights and participation in society by persons with disabilities. It's a day to remember that people with disabilities survive on \$930 a month for food, clothing and housing, and that this government has increased support to ODSP claimants by a mere 3%—better than a kick in the teeth, some people might say, but I think it's insufficient and shameful.

If we believe that this is not sufficient, do we then not have a moral and political obligation to increase ODSP support, and do it now? If we believe in a new disability

act, do you not think, as I do, that people with disabilities need it today rather than having to wait for 20 years?

UKRAINIAN ELECTION

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to two minutes on the situation in Ukraine.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for two minutes on the matter of Ukraine? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I'm pleased to be able to rise in my place as member for Parkdale-High Park on behalf of many interested members in this House, specifically members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Etobicoke Centre, but really, I believe, now on behalf of all of us.

We are standing here today in a place that is a long way from the streets of Kiev, where there are thousands of people who have been parked out overnight, camping in support of their right to have a free election. They've done that in a country that has not known the kinds of freedoms that we take for granted in the explicit way that we have them here.

We're not so far, though, from a vigil on Bloor Street in my riding, where there were dozens of young people yesterday, as young as eight years old, getting their first taste of what all of us need to be reminded of: that certain rights and certain inalienable freedoms have to be stood up for, that we have to take notice of them and do something about them if they're going to be exercised by people in every part of the world. So what started off as a matter for Ukrainians in Ukraine, and then for Ukrainian Canadians, is really now a matter for all of us.

There have been other times in other places: in Manila; in Gdansk; in East Berlin and other parts of eastern Europe. But today is a seminal time when decisions are being made by Ukraine's Supreme Court, where it has already suspended the results of the election, where the Ukrainian Parliament has voted not to uphold those results and to condemn the elections commission, where our national government, the European Union and the United States have all expressed that they will not accept the outcome of this election; that even we, in this provincial Legislature, need to be able to express some of what goes to the foundations of why we are here in the first place, whether or not there will be efforts made to uphold in every country, in every Legislature, to ensure that Ukrainians are able to express their rights to a free and democratic election.

I had in my office, a few years ago, students from Ukraine as eager, bright and intelligent as students anywhere in the world. But they didn't trust their banks. They didn't trust their police. They didn't trust any of their institutions, and they didn't trust their government. They stand on the precipice of being able to get the government that they really do need.

I hope we can ask every single member of this House to support the efforts of our government to support the Canadian government to make sure that there are fair and free elections held soon and that democratic processes do work in Ukraine.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): It's my privilege to rise on behalf of my leader, John Tory, and our caucus to speak on the current situation of tension and unrest in Ukraine.

Over 100 Canadian observers joined many others in Ukraine two weeks ago, during the most recent round of presidential elections there, only to find proof of systemic electoral abuses and fraud by the current regime. However, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens have taken to the streets in support of Viktor Yushchenko, the leader of democratic reforms in Ukraine. They have been joined by the clergy, the military and even by a radio station that announced it will no longer lie for the government on behalf of its candidate, Viktor Yanukovich.

I have had the privilege to reference the history of Ukraine many times in this House, from Stalin's man-made famine that killed close to nine million Ukrainians, to official Russification and the martyrdom of the clergy and the Ukrainian churches, to the wholesale exploitation of their natural resources as the breadbasket of Europe. Even the Chernobyl tragedy illustrates Moscow's contempt for the pain and suffering of its Ukrainian and Belarussian victims.

1500

I've also maintained close contact with the Ukrainian Legislature over the last few years and have been pleased to sponsor right here in this building Ukrainian interns who came to be exposed to our parliamentary democracy and its tradition.

I remember when Viktor Yushchenko visited this Legislature two years ago and personally confided that he did not think Russia would let him win the election, and that if he did, he feared for his life.

Canada, the US and the European Union are now calling in the strongest possible terms on Ukraine's current President to ensure that the democratic will of the citizens be respected and that no harm comes to these pro-democratic forces.

As a Canadian of proud ancestry—as is my colleague from the Liberal Party—that goes back over 100 years in this country, I join with all Canadians of goodwill in supporting the citizens of Ukraine in their struggle to bring democracy and economic prosperity to their country, to affirm their complete independence of Russia and to move forward with the international community of free nations in determining their own future.

I call on all members of our Parliament to likewise show their unreserved support for the ongoing struggle for the freedom and democratic rights of Viktor Yushchenko and the citizens of Ukraine.

Slava Ukraini.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The people in Ukraine find themselves in a very difficult and delicate situation, and I'm not going to advocate for

anyone in the current controversy there. But I want to, on behalf of New Democrats, underline some other issues that I think are at play here.

Many people felt that when the Iron Curtain came down and the Cold War ended, somehow we were going to live in a world where there were not going to be any controversies. There are some learned authors who say that in fact we'll revert now to the old controversies, that controversies will be about who has oil and where we can get it, who has the gas, who has the natural resources and where we can get them.

I want to read an excerpt from the CIA Factbook on Ukraine: "a strategic position at the crossroads between Europe and Asia." "Its natural resources include iron ore, coal, manganese, natural gas, oil, salt, sulphur, graphite, titanium, magnesium, kaolin, nickel, mercury and timber"—very rich in natural resources.

An article that has recently been written very clearly says, "Ukraine finds itself in a strategic location with regard to Caspian oil and natural gas reserves, and because of its proximity to Russia."

Another article says that much of the world economy now is about who has oil, and who has control of access to oil, and who can get oil. Indeed, many would say that what's going on in Iraq is not about weapons of mass destruction; it's about who has control of oil.

We all wish the best for the people of Ukraine. Most of all, we hope they do not get caught in a battle between those interests which really are concerned with oil and natural gas, and natural resources, and not concerned with what happens to people.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent that, notwithstanding standing order 30(b), routine proceedings continue beyond 4 pm today for the purposes of completing question period.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do I have unanimous consent that question period extend beyond the time? Agreed.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question, in the absence of the Premier, is directed to the Minister of Health. Yesterday the Premier said in this House, and I'll quote him directly, "We're going to continue talking to people about this deal." We had thought this would mean sitting down and restarting discussions with representatives of Ontario's physicians. Now we learn that instead of working with Ontario doctors, you and your government plan to begin advertising your cynical attempt to malign doctors and manipulate public opinion.

Minister, I have a very simple question for you: Why won't you reopen negotiations that go the extra mile to work constructively with Ontario physicians?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I do believe that 120 meetings and a further 44 meetings over a period of nine months stand as very, very considerable mileage to meet the test of the honourable member. Further, last Friday the Premier and I had an opportunity to meet with members of the executive committee of the Ontario Medical Association and present content, six points in direct response to the particular concerns addressed by the Ontario Medical Association in their press release of the prior Saturday.

On this basis, I think we've made significant enhancements to a deal that was already essential and important to providing care in a variety of communities in Ontario, 142 of which are without medical practitioners. I think it underscores our government's commitment to move forward in a fashion which addresses the underlying needs of the people of Ontario. That's about doctors in local communities, and that's what we're working toward doing.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister, he presents one picture and one tale of the events of last Friday. Here's what representatives of Ontario's physicians had to say about that meeting. They said that members of the executive of the Ontario Medical Association "are unanimous in their indignation and rejection of the process and tactics that your government has used in unilaterally imposing a new contract on Ontario's 24,000 doctors."

They go on: "It was apparent at that meeting"—the meeting you personally referenced just now—"that your government had no intention of working with" the OMA. They go on to say that they are "formally requesting that you continue to negotiate with the OMA to resolve our concerns" instead of acting unilaterally.

So I say to the minister, instead of your cynical attempt to manipulate public opinion, why won't you reach out and take the olive branch that Ontario's physicians are offering?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Last Friday morning, the Premier and I presented, on content, six very particular pieces of information designed to dramatically address the concerns that were brought forward by the Ontario Medical Association in their very own release. I hear the honourable member talk a lot about process, but I don't hear the honourable member talk about content.

Where does he stand, as an example, on the issue of the recognition of senior family physicians and the changes we've made; the better recognition of the role of solo physicians and the changes we made related to that; further improvements to reduce wait times by bringing forward additional resources to the earlier part of the agreement, to take caps off earlier for those specialists working in key wait time areas; fee increases in year one and two, directly responding to concerns that were raised during the ratification process; dramatically clarifying the process with respect to getting better utilization rates in the province of Ontario for drugs and bringing the \$50 million related to that right into the earlier part of the agreement; and closing the reassessment process that

some doctors had complained was too much power for the government of Ontario?

I think it makes the point rather well that we're working hard to address the content concerns that were brought to us by Ontario's doctors, but we're interested in moving forward on a basis to the benefit of the people of Ontario—many communities left behind by that party while in government.

Mr Baird: I say to the member opposite, if I have a choice between believing you and Dalton McGuinty or believing Ontario physicians, I'll stand behind Ontario physicians every day of the week. These aren't quotes that I'm giving; these are quotes from John Rapin, president of the Ontario Medical Association. He is joining the over 71% of the people of Ontario who, according to your own polling, don't trust you to competently manage health care in Ontario.

Let's look what else they're saying: "It is very easy to write and verbalize your commitments to work with doctors, but it is far more important to truly work in a co-operative manner to achieve real improvements to health care for Ontario patients." They go on that your plan "will do nothing to make Ontario more attractive to doctors practising in other jurisdictions, and will do nothing to encourage those currently practising to stay."

Minister, why don't you end this war with Ontario doctors and give peace a chance?

Interjections.

1510

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm being serenaded. I thought the best piece of drama in that question came from the fact that at the very beginning, when the honourable member was talking about the degree of respect that he has for Ontario's doctors, the acting Leader of the Opposition actually clapped, in sharp contrast to his public statements about the Ontario Medical Association and Ontario's doctors.

On the issue that the member raises, on Tuesday, as I had the opportunity to speak to the media, members of the Ontario Medical Association staff and members of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care had a meeting to discuss the content that we had presented the previous Friday. This is an example of the fact that strong bilateral relationships continue between our government and the Ontario Medical Association. We're anxious, of course, to hear direct feedback on the very six particular points of content that we moved forward with in response to the concerns addressed by the Ontario Medical Association. We're working on a content basis to improve the quality of care for the patients in the province of Ontario, and to address the very clear and present reality—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Could I have a new question?

AIR QUALITY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday, in response to a question from the leader of

the third party, you said that nobody should deny that your government has the strength and fortitude to press forward and replace coal generation with clean, renewable energy for the people of Ontario. This morning, we read in the media that your energy minister sees it differently. He said, "We're still looking at all the options. It may be prudent to keep one or more of the coal furnaces on reserve."

Minister, when you were responding yesterday, is that what you meant by Dalton McGuinty's strength and fortitude in keeping his promise? What are you doing, as the Minister of the Environment, to ensure that your government keeps this significant promise to improve the environment? What are you doing?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to have an opportunity to talk about what our government is doing to improve the environment. I expect that the honourable member would want me to focus on our achievements in improving air quality.

We have designated two cents of the gas tax to municipalities so they can invest in transit. That is going to have a very positive impact on our environment. Just last week we announced our ethanol strategy: By 2007, the 5% ethanol content in our gas is going to be the equivalent of removing 200,000 vehicles off of our roadways. Last spring, we introduced a five-point air emissions plan. We are going to limit NO_x and SO_x emissions for six additional sectors. We are going to improve the modelling, the measurement system that's in place in the province. We are going to take a risk-based approach and ensure that the nastiest contaminants that are spewed into our air are addressed first.

Those are just some of the things that our government is moving on to improve air quality for the people of Ontario.

Mr Runciman: I think that response could be officially designated as air pollution—there was no answer there. I asked the minister a specific question about a very key promise that her party, the Liberal Party of Ontario, made in the last election, 14, 15 or 16 months ago: a very clear commitment which has been reiterated time and time again ad nauseam by her colleague and herself, that they will indeed close all of the coal-fired generation in this province by 2007.

That should be a concern to you, Minister. You've said it; you have all of these nice stories to get up and tell us about. We applaud you for that, but I say to you, this was a key promise. What are you doing, as the Minister of Environment, to ensure that your government keeps that solemn promise?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The Minister of Energy will respond.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): This government remains committed to closing the coal-fired plants and replacing coal generation with clean renewables, according to the timeline we laid out to the end of 2007. Today, the Ontario Clean Air Alliance stated, "The good news is that right

now Ontario is setting the pace and setting a positive example as the only jurisdiction in North America that is committed to eliminating coal-fired power."

We will replace the coal-fired generation as per the time frame we outlined, and we'll do it in a prudent way that will clean up the air emissions related to coal, something the Conservative Party did not want to do—

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): And they oppose it today.

Hon Mr Duncan: —and they continue to oppose it. We will continue to work to replace that generation with new, clean, renewable energy sources so that the people of this province can breathe cleaner air for years to come.

Mr Runciman: It's pretty shameful that the Minister of the Environment couldn't respond to that important issue. The government has about two years left to make up 25% of its energy output. We don't hear a plan in this House; we hear a lot of political rhetoric.

Minister, I want to share some facts with you. Ontario's coal capacity is now over 7,600 megawatts. We currently have eight wind turbines, each with a power output of about 1.8 megawatts. According to your officials, wind turbines can be counted on only 30% of the time. If we assume there's no additional demand for energy, you would need over 17,000 additional windmills to make up for your closure of all coal plants. That's more windmills than exist in the United States.

When you made this very important political promise to close the coal plants by 2007, you must have known it was impossible to fulfill. In fact, you were just quoted on CFTO News as saying that Dalton McGuinty is only keeping "the essence" of his election promise, whatever the devil that means. Minister, you knowingly betrayed the trust of voters. If that's not the case, you are alarmingly incompetent. Which is it?

Hon Mr Duncan: The one fact the member didn't note and that I'm pleased to announce today is that when this government took office a year ago, Ontario relied on coal for 25% of its electricity. Today, according to the independent market operator, we rely on coal for 17% of our electricity.

I have enormous respect for the member opposite, but the incompetence of your researchers in not getting that information betrays what went on in your government. You did not understand the energy sector. You were content with the status quo, with CO₂ in our air, with nitrous oxide, with mercury and particulates. This government is not.

The people of Ontario chose change. We're bringing about change. We've reduced coal-fired dependence in this province by 32% to date, and we continue to move toward the commitment we made in the general election.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health, and it's about your antismoking campaign. Specifically, it's about the contract for the Web site stupid.ca, the television ads, the

whole promotional campaign. Who got the contract, and how much did you pay them?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'll take the question under advisement. I don't have that information at hand.

I would say to the people of Ontario watching and listening in that they should log on to stupid.ca. It is a campaign that has been developed—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Smitherman: No, I say to the honourable member from Simcoe that his picture is nowhere to be found there. What he will find is a very creative campaign—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: —seriously, a very creative campaign that has been developed by youth in the province of Ontario that we're very proud of.

Mr Hampton: It seems that the McGuinty government gave the contract to Mighty Digital Direct and Design, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Toronto advertising firm Bensimon Byrne. Heading that campaign is one Peter Byrne, Dalton McGuinty's personal image consultant, and advertising guru to the Ontario Liberal Party. When Mr Byrne came to work for Dalton McGuinty, he said he was working on his own time and doing you a favour. We wonder now who is doing favours for whom.

Minister, how do you justify giving this contract, which must be worth in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, to the company headed by Dalton McGuinty's personal image consultant and the advertising guru to the Ontario Liberal Party?

1520

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think it's important to note that the firm in question has done work for every government in Ontario. They have a reputation for doing excellent quality work, and the campaign will give you an opportunity to see the quality of the work they're doing. I'm very proud that as a government we have jumped over what the previous government did in the form of a comprehensive tobacco strategy, one that is significantly designed—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): You look stupid now, George.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member from Toronto-Danforth says that I look stupid now, but I think the reality very clearly is that for 12 years there hasn't been a comprehensive tobacco strategy in Ontario. Ruth Grier was the last Minister of Health who had one. I'm very pleased that the government of Ontario is working to address the realities, which are that tobacco-related diseases are the number one preventable cause of death in Ontario, and that as a government we're very committed to seeing their reduction.

Mr Hampton: Mr Byrne produced the most blatant case of misleading advertising in Canadian history: Dalton McGuinty's "I won't raise your taxes." Last week this government gave the president of the Liberal Party a \$475-million guaranteed hydro contract. This week

Dalton McGuinty's personal image consultant gets contracts worth, we believe, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. It seems to me that you guys are addicted over there, that you need to kick the habit. Will you stop sending the public's money to your Liberal pals, or is your pledge of open and transparent government yet again a broken McGuinty promise?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Notwithstanding the honourable member's actions and activities as the new host of Smear Factor, I think the reality is very clear. The Minister of Energy has clearly indicated how he is wrong on the energy case he raises. It seems interesting that in a province like Ontario, where we've launched a comprehensive strategy, we have a properly selected firm that has this enormous capacity, as, for example, with the Joe Canadian ads, which really struck an incredible chord, and this is exactly the kind of energy we need involved in a campaign that is designed to help kids stay off tobacco or quit if they've started.

I'm enormously impressed that we've been able to use the energy of young people themselves to help design and develop this campaign. It stands behind our commitment to deal with the number one preventable cause of death in our province, tobacco-related causes.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday you blurted out one of the worst-kept secrets: that you are not going close all the coal-fired electricity generating plants by 2007. Just a year ago Dalton McGuinty said, "We will shut Ontario coal-burning plants by 2007 and replace them with cleaner sources of energy." Admit it now, Minister, your promise to close down Ontario's coal-fired electricity generating plants has become yet another McGuinty broken promise.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): In the first year of this government, reliance on coal-fired electricity has decreased from 25% to 17%. In the first year of this government, we've brought on 395 new megawatts of clean, renewable green energy. In the first year of this government, we approved the Niagara Tunnel project. In the first year of this government, another 1,000 megawatts of power have come on stream. We remain committed to replacing Ontario's coal-fired generation according to the schedule we laid out, because unlike the member opposite who said he would do it in the election and then changed his mind in a CBC Radio interview, we believe that it's important to move as fast as we can to the deadlines we set to reduce the emissions associated with coal-fired generation, to reduce the incidents of childhood asthma, to reduce our reliance on the dirtiest form of energy. This government and our Premier are working diligently to achieve the promise we laid out in 2007, to replace our coal-fired generation.

Mr Hampton: The people of Ontario can listen to that hot air or to what the Globe and Mail has to say,

"Liberals Hedging on Promise to Shut Coal-Fired Power Plants"; or the Toronto Star, "Coal-Fired Plants Won't All Close"; or the Toronto Sun, "Duncan Warms to Coal." The people of Ontario can choose to believe a minister who has repeated this line, or they can acknowledge what everyone else in the province now knows: You're not going to keep the promise, you never intended to keep the promise, and you haven't done any of the planning, any of the energy supply work, to keep the promise. Even the chair of Ontario Power Generation, Jake Epp, whom you appointed, says you haven't done the planning and you haven't done the work necessary. Will you just finally admit that this is another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Mr Duncan: We continue to move toward our goal of replacing coal-fired generation by 2007, in spite of your objections. Let me say this: The news accounts were accurate about what I said with respect to keeping electricity or coal-fired burners possibly on reserve. When they invented electricity, they didn't throw out the candles; they kept them in the event of an emergency. We think that's the prudent response. We think that's the right thing to do in the context of eliminating CO₂ emissions, in the context of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

I invite the member opposite, and all members, to join this government as we move toward achieving our goal of replacing coal-fired generation by 2007, to ensure a cleaner and better environment for our children and their children. Stop fighting us in the NDP.

Mr Hampton: I merely want to repeat Dalton McGuinty's promise. He said he would close all the coal-fired stations by 2007 and replace them with cleaner sources of electricity. Dalton McGuinty didn't say, "I'll put them on hold." Dalton McGuinty didn't say, "I'll take them temporarily off-line." Dalton McGuinty didn't say, "We'll put them on reserve." He said, "Close them." And all the weasel words in the world are not going to help you now. Will you finally admit that this is yet again another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Mr Duncan: Well, since the member raised weasel words, let's talk about weasel words. In January, Mr Hampton compared one coal plant against the other and said, "Just look at those coal plants. Not all of the coal plants in Ontario today are huge pollution producers." You're wrong. You're dead wrong. They're all dirty, they're all bad, and we're going to replace that dirty coal-fired generation.

Talk about weasel words—it was his government that cancelled the deal with Manitoba on Conawapa, another 1,500 megawatts of potential green power. Had you kept your promise on that, there would be no challenge associated with coal. But in spite of your incompetence, in spite of the failure of the previous government, we remain committed to replacing the coal-fired generation in this province by 2007 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to reduce the NO_x, to reduce the SO_x, to reduce the mercury and to reduce the particulate. Please

join with us in what we think is an important environmental cause.

1530

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question. Member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Clearly, by the answer given by the Minister of Energy today, he is not being forthright with any of us. He knows that coal plants represent 25% of the generating capacity, and he also knows that that is primarily used for peaking supply. When he says it's 25% of capacity, he's got to know that we've also added to the generation grid 2,500 megawatts from gas as well as refurbishment of nuclear power. You know that.

You should also know that you fully endorsed the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force report. You endorsed that report. What did they say? Your good friends on that committee said that phasing out coal would mean the price is going to be both higher and more volatile. They also said that the supply would be more at risk.

Minister, you're putting the province, not just the people of Ontario but the very economy of Ontario, at risk. Just tell the people of Ontario what your plans are so that we know what you've been saying here in this House has been blowing smoke and what you said during the election is simply not correct. Tell this House today that you'll resign if you won't—

The Speaker: Minister of Energy?

Hon Mr Duncan: What we intend to do is replace coal-fired generation in this province by 2007. We do not underestimate the difficulty in that challenge. We do not take for granted that there was an enormous problem left to us by the previous government on the energy file. But we reject any argument that doesn't take into account the cost of increased childhood asthma. We reject any argument that doesn't take into account the impact of mercury on our lakes and streams. We do not reject any argument that takes into account the pollution from Nanticoke, which is the largest single-source polluter in North America.

This government remains committed to achieving its coal-fired generation replacement goal by 2007. Again, I invite the opposition to join with us as we move forward on achieving that goal.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of Energy: Minister, you now talk about keeping coal plants on reserve and restarting them as "a short process"; I'm told you've said a day and a half. Have you ever been to OPG Nanticoke? I've been there 30 times, and I can tell you that 600 workers at Nanticoke question your short process. Granted, if the plant is already in operation and one unit goes down, they tell me it can be restarted in eight hours. But they have no idea how long it would take to restart a shut-down plant because they've never done it before.

What maintenance is needed for a plant to be fired up at a moment's notice, Minister? What about staffing in the interim? What about coal delivery? What about fuel

contracts? Minister, do you have any idea what you're talking about?

Hon Mr Duncan: Yes, what we're talking about is cleaning up our environment and doing it in a responsible way. I can't understand; one moment the Tories sound like they want to close them and the next minute we have another Tory member wanting to keep them open and fired up all the time.

What should be clear is that we are moving toward replacement of coal-fired generation by the time frame we outlined. We're doing it by bringing on-line new, clean, renewable electricity to fuel this province's economic future in a responsible way and fashion for our environment.

FOOD SAFETY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Minister, this fall, you took swift action on one of the most pressing health crises of all time—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): What's that?

Ms Churley: Sushi. You put the freeze on this Japanese delicacy, claiming this fish dish is a real and present danger to our health and well-being. Your move devastated sushi lovers and caused great worry for restaurant owners. But now the truth is out: Your sushi ban is a red herring. Word is, you're getting ready to perform a patented Liberal flip-flop on this red herring. Minister, will you confirm your flip-flop here today and scrap the sushi crackdown?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's interesting that the honourable member would ask about flip-flops when it looks like she's been training with the seals.

I think that it's important—was that fish from the Don River?

Ms Churley: It's a red herring.

Hon Mr Smitherman: It's a sign that the Don River is coming back.

I want to say to the honourable member that we—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): We forced you to back down.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Yes, you forced me to do it, for sure.

The facts are very, very clear. The chief medical officer of health brought forward a regulation based on their analysis of scientific data. Upon reflection that was, in part, brought forward by a variety of community response, they took a harder look at the data. We continue to support the idea that freezing all fish before it's consumed is healthier for people. In fact, we confirmed that an estimated 75% of the sushi served is frozen before it's served. But I can confirm for the honourable member that, upon reflection, scientific evidence and the like, the chief medical officer of health's view is that this regulation could be revoked, and it will be.

Ms Churley: That was a red herring, not a seal. I'm from Newfoundland, so I can really tell the difference.

Look, the sushi ban is another example of how Liberals make promises without thinking them through clearly—and the Minister of Energy would be familiar with that.

In October, you said, "I'm proud to be able to say that Ontario's a leader. There's a lot of international evidence that lots and lots of people get sick when eating raw fish." Now, the chief medical officer says sushi is safe to eat.

Listen to what this critic had to say: "I don't know if we had a good enough understanding of what other jurisdictions were doing and what the risks really were." Who said that? The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health.

Minister, freezing sushi before you had the facts was reckless. You should admit that. It's an example of how you're not up to the job of handling the health care file. So I want to ask you now, will you promise that from now on you'll do your homework before making reckless announcements?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I do believe that the government's actions stand for themselves, and they stand in an important place, and it's this: Sometimes you get something a little bit wrong, and the appropriate thing to do in that circumstance is to move swiftly to make it right. If the honourable member wants to ridicule me for that, then I'm very, very comfortable with her doing so.

I want to say that I think this is a very, very apt demonstration of an important reality: that, from time to time, we get more information, we apprise ourselves of that information, and we take the appropriate decision. On behalf of the people of the province of Ontario, I promise to continue doing exactly the same.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, earlier today you introduced the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Amendment Act, a bill which makes substantial changes to the 1996 act and which responds to our government's commitment to streamline and strengthen enforcement tools for support orders to help those women—primarily women—and children in this province. I know that recipients of support orders in my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore will applaud the efforts that are being made to streamline and strengthen that system.

I understand that this new legislation, Minister, will allow FRO greater access to information, which will help FRO track down deadbeat parents and make them abide by their responsibilities to help their families. Can you give us some more details with respect to what information will be available so that our constituency offices can help the families that we help every day?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I know that many people have waited a long time to see more enforcement measures in the Family Respon-

sibility Office, because so many families are struggling, many of whom find themselves on social assistance because those who are to pay are simply ignoring their responsibilities. In many cases, our office is designated to find these people. We have set up a new trace-and-locate unit within the Family Responsibility Office. We fondly call it our own CSI in the government of Ontario.

Let me say that what we need to do is go out and access more information to find people. Now we'll be in a position to go to trade unions, for example. So we will now be able to access those who work in the trades. We can acquire additional information—some of the basics like addresses and phone numbers—when we get names, which will go a long way to helping us find people. Some of them are very basic steps that we should have had for a long time. I can tell you, though, that we're looking forward to using them to find people and bring them into compliance.

1540

Ms Broten: Thank you, Minister, I know from my constituents that at long last things at FRO are getting a bit better, and some tough new measures are being put in place.

It's also imperative, obviously, that the system be user-friendly and fair. I have worked over the years with many families who are caught in the bureaucratic red tape of FRO. They've reached an agreement, the child has turned 18, the child is out of school, and those families get caught in that system. Can you tell us what efforts are being made to help those responsible payers who are trying to meet their obligations, to make sure that they're not caught in red tape and bureaucratic measures at FRO?

Hon Ms Papatello: I appreciate the question. I know that this member has long worked with her own community to get people better access to the Family Responsibility Office as well. There are a number of items in this bill that really do ensure fairness. We're not picking sides; we simply want to bring people into compliance. In areas where, frankly, it has come about because of an acrimonious breakup, typically through the courts, it results in a court order where both sides are not often very happy. When a court order can be changed, for example, because the intent of it is obvious, we now have the authority in the Family Responsibility Office to make those small changes to the court order, so that we can bring some fairness into the system. I know many payers are going to appreciate that.

In some instances, I think it's fair to say that we wanted access to third party information in order to get at some financial assets. I think it's entirely fair that we now will have a much easier time to get after those who are trying to hide assets through a third party. This is going to be very important for people who deserve to have the support that the court order has mandated.

We appreciate the support from all members of the House as we move this bill through so we can have these further enforcement measures.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Many members, I think, will have noticed, particularly recently, the growth, the expansion of these so-called payday loan shops in the province. This is an industry that I suggest we do not want to see grow in Ontario.

It is really a loansharking business. It's a scourge on our communities. The Criminal Code of Canada, as the minister knows, provides that the maximum per annum interest is 60%, which is substantial enough, but these payday loan shops are charging effective interest rates of between 300% and 900% per annum.

I know Bill 70 came to the House and requires disclosure, but I say to the minister that the issue here is not disclosure to vulnerable people; it's about protecting vulnerable people in the province. I ask the minister what plans he or his government has to bring in legislation to stop this practice in Ontario.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm delighted that my friend from Whitby-Ajax has taken the opportunity to shed some light on this issue. I think what the public is looking for is to be satisfied that at both levels of government we are doing everything necessary to protect consumers. And so my friend, if he were debating this in a place other than this Parliament, would probably want to put on the record that the regulation of interest rates and the enforcement of criminal violations which arise from offences against the Interest Act are the responsibility of the federal government.

My own ministry is working directly with the federal government. I'm working with my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services to see the appropriate way in which the government of Ontario should intervene. I should tell you, because my friend has raised it, that very recently there was a decision of the Financial Services Tribunal, an agency right within my own department, which upheld our regulator's order that a particular company was abusing the insurance provisions that I'm responsible for, and we were able to deal with a perpetrator and a violator on that basis.

I'd be interested in the suggestions of my friend from Whitby-Ajax as to where else he thinks we should go.

Mr Flaherty: My suggestion is, do something: Bring a bill to this House, or call the police. It's a Criminal Code provision. These people are being preyed on. The Attorney General is responsible for the administration of justice in Ontario. You brought in a bill regulating them with respect to disclosure, but you didn't do what needed to be done, and I urge you to do it.

The minister responsible, Mr Watson, said yesterday that he's got a group together. They're going meet next June to talk about it. The businesses themselves have formed an association. They say they're OK with disclosure but they do not plan to change their interest rates on loans.

You know what they do? They lend money to somebody and then, when the person's next paycheque comes

up—they're a couple of days from pay—they double up on the loan again. This is staggeringly wrong. This is a matter of consumer protection for low-wage earners in the province of Ontario. Please bring in legislation here.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Very recently, we brought in a whole series of new regulations requiring dramatically new disclosure in the insurance industry. I should tell you that on this matter relating to so-called payday loan entities, we have been working directly with my colleague the Attorney General to identify areas of criminal violation, and we will prosecute those.

I will tell you that we have been working directly with my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services to make sure that the very highest standards of consumer protection are in place. And I can tell you as well, sir, that we are working directly with the federal government, which is responsible for both the Criminal Code and the regulation of interest rates, to ensure that the consumers of this province, and indeed of this country, are protected against that kind of loansharking.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you'll know that the auditor this week in his report, on pages 415 and 416, spoke of the ever-decreasing state of the infrastructure in our Ontario parks. We know that this infrastructure includes everything from visitor centres to sewer treatment systems, water systems, bridges, docks, and a number of other things that are basically part of that infrastructure. The auditor is saying that some of this stuff is 25 to 50 years old. It has not been in a good state of repair for some years and, quite frankly, your Ministry of Natural Resources budget is inadequate to address the ever-crumbling infrastructure in those parks.

My question to you is simply this: Will you commit today in this House that you will ensure that you'll have the money necessary from the Minister of Finance in your next budget to upgrade the infrastructure in our provincial parks system to make sure it's safe for the public that uses those parks?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): Yes, I can give the member that assurance.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr Bisson: I know how to take yes for an answer.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, today we heard you speak so eloquently about the barriers faced by people living with disabilities in Ontario. Tomorrow marks the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons, and I hope that everyone will take a minute to reflect on the challenges that face those living with disabilities within our society.

In the past few weeks, members have debated the proposed new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004, and today the act has passed second reading and has been referred to the standing committee on social policy. This act would make Ontario one of the world leaders in improving accessibility and deliver real, positive change for people with disabilities.

I was privileged to hear some of the debate that took place during second reading and heard many members from both sides of the House speak very passionately about this bill. I heard members tell personal stories of people within their own lives who had to deal with challenges of an Ontario that is not fully accessible. These stories were incredibly touching and showed the commitment of all the parties to see change brought forward on a very important issue. Yet there is one question that the opposition repeatedly raised, and that is on the 20-year timeline. My friends in both the PC and the NDP caucus asked, "Why is the government waiting 20 years?" Minister, could you please explain the time frame laid out in the proposed act and the approach with which standards and change would be implemented?

Interjection.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for the question. Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Mr O'Toole, for waiting.

We believe the proposed legislation sets a realistic time frame to achieve accessibility, with milestones every five years and real concrete results in five years or less. Achieving an accessible Ontario would mean changes to facilities, programs, services, how we work and how we communicate. Our time frame would ensure a smooth transition to an accessible Ontario.

I'm not alone in thinking that our approach of benchmarks every five years and an accessible Ontario in 20 years is realistic. Here's what others have to say:

David Lepofsky: "We know that you can't make Ontario barrier-free overnight."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce: "We welcome the phased-in approach," and, "Businesses need time to absorb the costs."

It's a reasonable, logical approach. We've received a lot of positive feedback on it and I'm very proud of our government.

1550

Mr Kular: Minister, I agree that the phased-in approach of benchmarks every five years is a realistic vision and would see real change finally realized in Ontario. I think this approach is especially significant for business, and the endorsement of the timeline by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is noteworthy. I know that in my own riding, many businesses, small businesses, are going to be affected by this proposed legislation. If the legislation is passed, I ask you, Minister, what would be the impact on businesses in Ontario?

Interjection: Good question.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Yes, indeed, it is a good question.

Businesses play an important role in implementation of this proposed act, and so I appreciate the question very much. Improved accessibility means eliminating barriers, and a part of that equation would see persons with disabilities provided access to stores, jobs and services previously unavailable to them. This would include persons with disabilities who live and work in Ontario, as well as persons with disabilities all over the world who travel or do business here.

We would be asking business and the broader public sector to help shape accessibility outcomes and accessibility standards that apply to those outcomes. Economic factors would be considered as part of the timelines for complying with standards in up to five-year increments. This would allow business time to comply with standards as part of their normal business planning and capital renewal cycles. Furthermore, this approach we are proposing will keep costs to business at a minimum. In fact, it will be less than 1% of capital costs in the next 20 years, and less than 0.01% of retail costs.

GREENBELT LEGISLATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: As part of the greenbelt plan, a plot of land in the Thorold-Niagara Falls area just north of Highway 58 and west of Mountain Road has been graded as tender fruit land. This land is home to the regional public works yard, a police training facility, an industrial area, a garbage dump and a cemetery. Minister, we're concerned that your greenbelt plan is not based on good science. Could you inform the House what kind of good science would have you grow tender fruit in a cemetery or a junkyard?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I welcome a question like this because it exactly illustrates our point to the extent that we want to make sure that we have the delineation of the greenbelt correct. That's why we're meeting with municipal officials, with the planning officials of the various municipalities. We're meeting to make sure that the delineation is correct, because we are interested in making sure that the farmland, that the sensitive agricultural lands and the sensitive environmental lands are in fact being protected.

That's what the greenbelt is all about, and if there are any specific instances that this member knows about where that's not exactly the case right now, let's know about it. We'll take a look at it. As we've already indicated, we'd like see the bill passed as soon as possible, but the actual mapping will take another 45 days to make sure we get it right.

Mr Hudak: The problem, Minister, is that the same municipal leaders, the same planners, the same farmers, business leaders and environmentalists are asking for more time to make sure we get the greenbelt right. We in the opposition believe in protecting green space. We do

so based on good science and a plan to make sure it's successful.

We're very concerned that the science is lacking here. There's an arbitrariness and a rushed nature that will prevent the greenbelt from being successful. Good science, no matter how talented the farmer, doesn't mean he can grow tender fruit in a cemetery; good science would not have you cut a Durham farm in half; good science would not have you cut the Holland Marsh in half, as your draft plan originally did; and good science would likely not leave out areas like Pleasantview or Boyd Park.

Minister, let's try to get the greenbelt right. Why don't we get together, bring in the stakeholders, and send this to a legislative committee in the new year. We want to make sure the greenbelt works.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: As the member well knows, all of the Holland Marsh is included in the greenbelt—absolutely. He knows as well as I do that this will be an absolute jewel in Ontario. We want to protect the entire million acres of farmland, of sensitive environmental land. As a matter of fact, a certain person in this House said one day, "The greenbelt ... could be a jewel for the entire province, the country and for visitors from abroad to enjoy." That was Tim Hudak, on Monday, November 15 of this year, during debate here.

We agree with the member that we want to see this implemented as quickly as possible, but we also want to make sure that it's done in the right and proper way, and the way we're going to do it is by meeting with municipal official, planning officials and the interested parties so that we know we've got the right delineation of this greenbelt plan, which everyone can enjoy the benefit of for many years to come.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): A question to the Minister of Natural Resources: You've stated that the government's Greenbelt Act and plan will restore, protect and preserve our watersheds and natural heritage for present and future generations. However, there's a massive gap between your government's stated goal for the greenbelt and the reality on the ground. Contrary to protecting water and water sources, your greenbelt plan will permit new and expanded aggregate extraction throughout the greenbelt area. One of the worst examples is the slated expansion of the Milton quarry, which will put a giant hole in the Niagara Escarpment, the spine of the greenbelt, and will threaten to dry up local streams and wetlands. Minister, given the serious impacts on water of aggregate extraction, will you intervene with your government to ensure that new or expanded aggregate sites will not be permitted in the greenbelt?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): As the member knows, the Aggregate Resources Act is one of the most progressive acts in the world in regard to the control of the extraction of aggregates. The member

also knows that it's very important, for the growth that's to happen in southern Ontario, that we have affordable access to aggregates. So the job in my ministry, obviously, is to balance the preservation of natural heritage lands and the accessibility of aggregates so that we can both prosper and grow here in southern Ontario.

Ms Churley: The Environment Commissioner—it's not just me—has said the opposite a number of times now, that Ontario is one of the worst, not one of the more progressive, when it comes to aggregate extraction. Not only are new aggregate operations and the expansion of existing operations going to be allowed throughout the greenbelt, but new wording in this Liberal government's proposed provincial policy statement significantly strengthens the aggregate industry's clutch on greenbelt lands. When it comes to aggregates, you're making the Tories look green. Your policy is worse than theirs.

You promised the people of Ontario a greenbelt, not a gravel belt. If you are truly serious about protecting water and watersheds, then you must move now to stop new and expanding aggregate operations in the proposed greenbelt. Minister, I ask you again, will you intervene to stop new and expanded aggregate operations within the greenbelt boundaries?

Hon Mr Ramsay: I must tell the member that the aggregate industry actually is quite concerned about restrictions that are being placed upon them by the greenbelt strategy, so it sounds like we may have it right. If you're upset and they're upset, we probably have the right balance.

I'd also like to remind the member that our source water protection watershed studies are underway. As you know, my ministry has funded our conservation authorities to the tune of over \$10 million, and we are looking at that.

The last thing I'd say too the member is that the aggregate sites that are being approved today are totally rehabilitated. I'd love to take you around to see some of these things; you would never recognize them as ever being quarries.

CURRICULUM

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Education. Last week, the Education Quality and Accountability Office released the results of the standardized provincial math testing for grade 9 students. The students who are in the advanced math did quite well, but the students who are in the applied math were not quite as successful, and that's caused some concern in my riding from parents who have students who are in the applied math courses. The parents in my riding—and I'm sure parents in all of Ontario—are wondering what our government is doing to help support those grade 9 students in applied math so that we don't have the same results next year.

1600

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): Thank you very much for the question. This is a question

that should concern everyone in the House because it is one of the toughest legacy items that we had coming into government, which is that the so-called new curriculum has actually been very difficult on certain students. It has resulted in, for example, a prediction from Dr King at Queen's University, who tracks this for the Ministry of the Education, that 12,000 students will not have high school diplomas as a result of the transition from a five- to a four-year curriculum. And almost all of those students will have had difficulty in grade 9 mathematics.

That went on for, unfortunately, three years in our system—four years, in fact, where nothing was done to help those particular students. They failed at 75% rates, even with an improvement this year, still far too many for anyone in this House, or anyone in the system, to say that it is the fault of those students. This is not an accurate reflection of their potential.

We believe we have to take some responsibility to amend both the approach we take in the curriculum and the curriculum itself to make sure that these students have a better chance. We are also, starting last year, providing more remedial help, providing more assistance to make sure they can do the best they can.

But clearly, the government has to take responsibility for the prior decisions that were made and help these students be able to have a math curriculum that will be more challenging. I'll tell you this, more students will learn more math under the approach that we're bringing into Ontario schools.

Mrs Van Bommel: Thank you very much, Minister. I know the parents appreciate hearing that we as a government are moving forward to help those students to achieve success in their own right. But I also want to carry that just a little bit farther. High school students have a lot more challenges than just in math: I'd like to know what our government is doing to help students all across this province achieve excellence for themselves.

Hon Mr Kennedy: There is the broader question of how we are going to make sure that every student has a good outcome. That is the goal we set for ourselves. That outcome could be apprenticeship, a co-op program, a work experience with skills, or it could be college or university.

We have a broad outlook in our society: 81% of parents want their students to be in university. And we want as many as possible to be able to go, whatever the right level of advancement is for them. We have to just amend a little bit how we have this high ambition for our kids. In the system, we're now developing alternate programs for students to be able to make sure that they do find success.

We're going to make sure they acquire literacy and numeracy at a high level by age 12 so they have the best choices. But we're also going to be offering another range of programs. We're looking at an alternative diploma that would allow every student to have their eye on success. We're also looking forward to raising the school-leaving age once these new programs are in place so that more students are learning for the time that they

have to, to have a successful life and successful position in the workforce.

GREENBELT LEGISLATION.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the minister responsible for municipal affairs. Last Thursday, I had the opportunity to attend the hearings on the greenbelt legislation, although I didn't get the opportunity to put my question. So at that time I said I'd bring it forward in the House.

The area of concern is that you're changing the protection distance from the stream to the new meter mark. The question is, is it from the current water level, the high-water mark or the 100-year water mark? Depending on the interpretation, it could be substantial—as much as twice the length of this room—added to the current length you're on there.

Not only that, the forestry practices in Ontario specifically state the area you can harvest up to depends on the angle of the bank, how steep it is. Are you considering that? Have you looked at the forestry aspects? What is the current water level going to be allowed in there?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I certainly appreciate the question. I'd be more than pleased to look into it and get back to the member.

But I think the thing to remember is quite simply this: Existing uses within the greenbelt can continue. The Greenbelt Act does not take anything away from the existing uses that land is being put to currently, whether it's agricultural or otherwise. I'll look into the member's question and get back to him.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That brings us to the end of question period. It being after 4 o'clock, I think we go to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

Mr Phillips moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising /
Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I believe we have unanimous consent from an earlier motion that we are going to split the time three ways. I suspect that each party will get roughly 15 minutes, if I'm not mistaken. I want to indicate to the House that I'll be sharing my time with the member from

Etobicoke North, the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge and the member from Thornhill.

Let me begin by saying that this truly is an historic piece of legislation that, if passed, I believe will be the first of its kind in North America, and perhaps in the world. It is legislation designed to ban governments from using partisan advertising paid for by the taxpayer to promote their own interest. As I say, I think it's a groundbreaking piece of legislation.

For the public's information, essentially what it does is, if the government wants to do any paid advertising or if the government wants to distribute, on a bulk basis, householders, it must first obtain the approval of our Auditor General. The Auditor General will be given some very clear guidelines on what can or cannot be advertised. The advertising cannot be partisan, and the Auditor General will determine that; the advertisement must contain the cost of the advertising; and the advertising must, to use the language, be a reasonable means "to inform the public about government policies, programs or services..." or it must be a reasonable means "to inform the public of their rights and responsibilities..." or "to encourage or discourage specific social behaviour in the public interest" or, fourthly, "to promote Ontario or any part of it as a good place to live, work, invest, study or visit" or promote any activity or sector of Ontario's economy. As well, the ad cannot contain the image of the Premier or a member of the legislative council.

I might also add that the member from Mississauga will also be participating in our comments.

As I said earlier, this is a piece of legislation that will set this Legislature apart from any other jurisdiction in North America. I think, if passed, we should be very proud of this legislation. I'd just like to touch on a couple of concerns that have been expressed. One is that the legislation does permit the government to use, in jurisdictions outside Ontario, advertising using the image of the Premier or of a member of the executive council. I will stress to all of us that it still must be approved by the Auditor General.

1610

The reason for this one exception is—I use this example: If the people of Ontario remember, in the last few months Florida's gone through several hurricanes. They wanted to attract people back down there from Ontario as tourists. They used as their spokesperson the governor of Florida. Why? It is because the head of the government, often, in another jurisdiction would have the most authority. If Ontario needs to make a statement in another jurisdiction about, whatever—investing in Ontario or coming to Ontario for any reason—I think it would be a mistake if we were to exclude the opportunity for the province to use what, in many jurisdictions, would be the most credible spokesperson. So that's the one exception in the bill, and I think for the taxpayers and the people of Ontario it's the right exception.

So I look forward to the debate this afternoon. I look forward to the Legislature dealing with this bill. I gather,

Mr Speaker, the plan is that on Monday there will be a vote on third reading. I would just say to all of us that I hope we will all support the bill. It's a piece of legislation that we can be justly proud of.

With that, I'd like to provide an opportunity for other members of our caucus to speak.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Mr Speaker, opposition time also will be shared, with the member for York North and the member for Durham.

We are here debating Bill 25. It was introduced just over a year ago, actually. An entire year has gone by for this government to push this legislation through, and yet here we are today, debating it. It makes one wonder if the Liberals are really dedicated to this concept of democratic renewal. We've seen little indication on the part of the government that they really want to call this legislation. They're dragging their feet.

Once the bill is passed, once it does receive royal assent, they won't be able to put out any pieces like their self-serving year in review. This was a government document, printed in red. I think the colour is Liberal wine. I won't hold this document up, but you know how it works. They may not proclaim this legislation until closer to the election, for that matter, and claim this as one of their efforts with respect to supposed democratic renewal lip service. We all know the track record of this government over the past year, a government that is practising something it does not preach, and it preaches what it does not practise.

If there were any real commitment to democratic renewal, we would have seen government members rise in support of the concept of recall, for example. I presented a private members' bill and the member for Whitby-Ajax has presented a private members' bill on recall, and we may well see an initiative toward democratic renewal, as with this particular government advertising bill which comes under the rubric of democratic renewal.

Government members are not supporting recall. When democratic renewal comes calling, this government sticks its head in the sand for fear of losing a position they've achieved by making election commitments they could not keep. It's the same with this waiting game that we see with the government advertising legislation, Bill 25.

We welcome getting this government to this stage of this legislative process, because we want it passed. We would have liked the Liberal government to have brought this thing forward sooner—they had a year—and we would have liked also to have the Auditor General take a look at some of the Liberal wine pieces that I see before me here.

I'll wrap it up there. There are two other members of our party who will stand in rotation.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'll be sharing this with all the members—oh, no, sorry. I want to take time here—I'm going impersonate every member of caucus. I want start with Rosario Marchese. No, that's another story.

I just want to put a couple things on the record in this particular debate. I didn't get a chance on second reading,

and we have a truncated debate here at third reading so I'm going to take an opportunity to put a couple things on the record.

It's an interesting debate in the sense that there was a genuine call, I believe, on the part of the opposition during the Mike Harris government time that there be something done to curb the government's appetite to utilize advertising in a partisan political way when it comes to government advertising. I remember back then sitting in opposition with the then Liberal opposition, and they were pretty adamant that this had to be done. So I expected when the government came forward that it was going bring a bill that basically did what the Liberals said they'd do when they were in opposition and would do what they said it would do in the period of the election. To an extent it does, but it falls pretty short as far as the actual teeth of the legislation and about how this is going to work.

If you were to have a bill that says, "We're going to ban partisan political advertising," you would think that when you read the bill, it would actually do what the title says. But the reality is, when you look at the bill, it falls short of that. I think the government needs to make up its mind about what it wants to do. Is this a partisan political bill so that the government, on one side, can stand and say, "We are banning partisan political advertising. Look at us how good we are. We've got a bill," and then it's able to do pretty well what any other government did before because of the way the bill is written? Or is this bill really going to do, at the end of the day, what it was meant to do? I don't think it is and I think that's a little bit sad.

I want to put on the record that I believe a government has the right to advertise. I'm not going to stand here and say, "Governments should not have the ability to have government programs and government policies advertised within the province of Ontario." That's silly. I don't think any government or any party would argue that you don't need to do that. For example, the Ministry of Natural Resources from time to time has the need to advertise to the public to let them know things. There may be an aerial spraying going on, and we need to let people in that particular area know that that area is now being sprayed and it would be a good idea for people not to go. You may have health and safety issues that you want to advertise to consumers.

In the summer, look at the advertising blitzes that go on within the various ministries, like the Ministry of the Environment when it comes to the whole issue of trying to reduce the amount of air pollution by way of smog that is generated by coal-fired plants—that are going to be running after 2007, but that's for another debate—or by way of cars. So governments need to engage, and I think rightfully so, in advertising, and I think nobody argues that a government shouldn't have the right to do that.

However, there is an argument to be made that the government should not be using the huge sums of money that are at its disposition to try to highlight a particular bill that it's very associated with as a way of being able

to advertise to the voters of this province that it is doing something that is popular, for electoral gain. I think that's where you've got to make the division, and that's where it gets really murky.

For example, let's say the government was to pass a bill, call it Bill 123, and the government knows that particular bill is a positive bill and the opposition votes in favour of it. All of a sudden, the government decides it's going to spending millions of dollars to advertise that bill. Is that partisan political advertising? I guess some people would argue it probably is, to a degree. When I look at this legislation, the legislation doesn't preclude you from being able to do that. It doesn't preclude you from being able to advertise by way of third party. I don't mean third party in the Legislature, I mean third-party advertising. There's nothing done to deal with that.

It doesn't preclude you from being able to advertise by going to markets outside of Ontario. For example, in the age of cable television, much of the television our people watch is, by and large, generated outside Ontario. It could be in Manitoba, in New York or in California, for all we know. The government does nothing in this bill that precludes it from producing an ad in the United States and running it on American television about a particular issue it wants to push forward.

1620

My first point is that I wish the bill did what it said it would do, and if it did, I guess I wouldn't have any difficulty voting for this bill. But as I look at the bill, you're still going to be allowed, in the end, when this legislation is passed, to do partisan political advertising by way of using government dollars, which brings up the other issue: Is there a genuine need—this is a bit of a different issue and people might think it a bit odd that I raise this—for MPPs to basically communicate with their constituents about whatever is going on in the Legislature?

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: It's interesting, because I heard members on all sides of the House, from all three parties, say yes to that comment. Why is it, then, that the government doesn't deal with issues such as making sure that members have the right, as we had before, to be able to put out a newsletter, or two or three, per year so that we can let people in our constituency know what we've been doing here at Queen's Park on behalf of the people who voted for us?

For example, our federal members, as we all know, have unlimited mailing privileges. They can put up, I think, 10% of their riding per week and they're allowed to advertise, basically send out a flyer to say what it is their member has been doing. My former member, Mr Bélair, who was a Liberal member, did that. My current federal member, Mr Angus, who's a New Democrat, does that as well.

They're entitled to put out three householders per year, in other words, a report from the members saying, "Here's what I've been doing. Here are the initiatives that have been going on in the Legislature. What do you

think about the heritage act? It's a way of canvassing the public so you can get some feedback.

Nothing in this bill deals with the genuine need of members to be able to communicate with their constituents. I think that's somehow kind of contrary to what this place should be all about, and that is that we should be, on all occasions, trying to find ways, as members, to open the Legislature up to the people of Ontario. One of the ways we do that, obviously, is by televising our debates here and by allowing the House to be open, as it always is. Any member of the public can be here, but not everybody from Cochrane or Timmins or Brockville, or wherever it might be, or Windsor—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Fort Erie.

Mr Bisson: —or Fort Erie can make it here to Queen's Park every day to watch the Legislature. Most people have pretty busy days. They don't even get a chance to watch television to watch what's going on. So I think there's a genuine need, and I think the government—I'm saying this, standing up in this House, for the public to know and for the media to report. I think that, quite frankly, this Legislature should think about the need of members to be able to communicate with their constituents. That's part of what's not in this bill.

So I want to say up front that I have no difficulty with the genuine need of the government to advertise particular government policies or programs, and I have no difficulty with the ability of members to keep their constituents up to date with what's going on at Queen's Park. For example, I would like, as I'm sure my good friend Mr Wilkinson would as well, to put a householder out in my riding and say, "Here are some of the government initiatives that are now currently before the House. Tell me what you think about it, as a constituent of the riding. What are the pros? What are the cons?" and then take that information and bring it back so that we're able to better do our jobs.

I think it's a good mechanism to allow people to communicate. We can do that by Internet to a certain extent, but not everybody can. There's about a 55% connectivity on the Internet, and I would argue that probably, of the 55% of the population who are connected to the Internet, not a lot of people use it in that way. Unfortunately, or fortunately, that's just the way it is.

My argument is that there's a genuine need on the part of government and members to communicate with people. We need to allow that to happen, and we need to make sure it's done in a non-partisan way. For example, if a member has mailing privileges or householders, or both, there need to be rules in place that say, "Gilles Bisson can't grab a newsletter, send it out to the constituents, and say, 'By the way, next week, I'm having an NDP fundraiser. Come to my fundraiser.'" That would be wrong. Would you agree? I think that would be totally wrong. The government and the members of this House would have the right to sanction me if I ever decided to do that. That's the kind of legislation we need.

Conversely, we would argue that the government should not use their advertising dollars in their ministry

budgets to try to position the government in a particular way when it comes to trying to enhance their electoral chances with the public of Ontario. Quite frankly, I don't think it's good public policy, and at the end of the day I don't think it serves us well as legislators.

It comes back to one of the issues that I think we've all heard as we go back into our constituencies, and that is that there's a larger and larger sense of people disconnecting from politics. As we go around and talk to people, not only in our constituencies but around this province, and, I would argue, around this country, each passing day there are less and less people who have confidence in politicians and the institutions of Parliament. I think one of the reasons for that—there are a lot of reasons, and we can get into this debate, but part of it is that the public just tunes us out because of the partisanship that sometimes happens, and I think we need to find ways to lessen that.

I'm not going to argue here for one second that we, as politicians, will never be partisan. Listen, there are elections. I can guarantee you that I will be partisan at election time. If I'm not, I think the voters will quickly figure out what to do. There are times, on particular bills where you're pretty ideologically opposed or in support, when you're going to be partisan to a degree as well. But the argument I'm making, as it relates to Bill 25, is that when the public sees us using this ability we have to communicate, by way of large budgets, in a partisan way—for example, my good friend the Minister of Industry, Trade and Technology will remember the ad that the Harris government did on fixing government. Do you remember the big one that they spent—they had an electrical panel, and they had wires all over, plugged into it. Remember, they had that running for a while at Maple Leaf Gardens and on television, and it was on bus shelters. I think a lot of people looked at that and said, "Here's a government trying to sell itself." I think that's where the public disconnects with us. All I'm saying is, as legislators we need to somehow figure out a way that we can regain the trust of the people who are the voters and the citizens of the province of Ontario. If we don't do that, I think democracy starts to fail to a certain extent.

There are a lot of things we've got to do. I would argue that it's not just advertising, obviously. We need to look at democratic reform. Give the government some credit. I'm going to say it here today. I'm going to give the government some credit. The government is proposing a process by which we can talk about how we can reform our democracy and our assembly here in such a way that people can see themselves and have more confidence in them. I have some difficulties with how you're approaching it. It's a little bit like what happened in British Columbia, where you know the product you want at the end, so you sort of shove it in that direction. I don't think that's right. I think the process should be that you consult and you say to people, "Here's the problem. Here are some of the possible solutions. Let's have some town hall meetings across the province." You can have non-politicians chair them; I don't care. You can have

some good discussion, and you bring that back. At the end of the day, it's got to come back to us, as legislators. I think you'd have to send it to a standing committee in order to deal with some of the very complex issues.

For example, British Columbia just went through a huge process. They had those constituents' assemblies that they put together, and in the end, they basically are trying to bind themselves by way of what happened out of that process. All I argue is, there are a lot of parts of the Election Act and a lot of parts of the way this House operates that, never mind the public, quite frankly some politicians don't understand. You might think you're doing the right thing, but you might be doing harm.

Let me give you a good example: the bill before the House today. We now have a bill that I support: the fixed-date elections. I happen to be one of the people in my caucus—we're not unanimous on this—who says, "That's not a bad idea." However, if you don't associate with that bill some sort of rule that says there will be no campaigning, no spending of money—only the 27-day period of the election—do you know what's going to happen? It'll be Americanized elections. All of us will be advertising. Our riding associations and political parties will be out for a year or a year and a half before the elections jockeying for position in preparation for an election to which we know the date.

My point, as I relate this back to what I was saying, is that often you have a good idea, the public may come up with a good idea in the process that the government has put forward in regards to its democratic reform package, but sometimes people don't understand the nuances and the intricacies of the Election Act and other bills that are associated. I just think that, as legislators, we've got to take back the information we get from the public at one point, and we need to stand it at committee, and we have to get, yes, the parties involved, we have to get the chief electoral officer involved and also those people who are knowledgeable about Parliament; for example, our clerks. The people who work here in the House are probably some of the best in the province—well, not in the province; in Canada—when it comes to being able to understand how a British parliamentary House works. I think we'd be doing ourselves and the public a disservice if we were to be in a position of trying to reform our House without having some discussion with clerks, because they understand the rules.

1630

My point is this: In the end, if we want to make this place less partisan and make it work better on the part of the people of Ontario, it's not by monkeying around at the edges that we're going to do it. I believe we have to be honest with ourselves and say, as in the case of Bill 25, is there a genuine need for government to advertise? As a New Democrat, I say yes. Is there a genuine need on the part of members to communicate with their constituents? The answer is yes. We should deal with those issues out in the open, so the public can see what we're saying, where we are on the record and what the expenditure should be. Attempting to say we're doing

something at the end of the day by a bill like Bill 25, that's a step in the right direction, but it really leaves the barn door open. I say it doesn't do justice to what the overall goal is.

I just say to members in this debate, I think it's high time we as legislators try to take back control of our Legislature. We've got to stop letting the Premier—the person who sits in that chair—along with a group of advisers who are non-elected people around the Premier, drive the legislative agenda in the assembly, in many cases for partisan political gain. I think we as members need to take some of that control back, and the way we do that is by trying to be as honest as we can with ourselves about what our needs are as politicians, as political parties, and how we reform this place in order to meet some of those needs.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): In the time remaining to the government, we'll continue to share our time with the members from Thornhill and Mississauga West.

I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 25, following the Chair of Management Board on our side of the House. I want to make a couple of early comments about the broad intent of the bill, and I think it falls into three parts.

One is to set some standards, some purposes for which governments advertise, to lay out a framework: things like informing the public of their rights and responsibilities—that seems like a reasonable purpose for which governments should advertise; activities such as promoting Ontario, or any part of it, as a good place to live, work, invest and study; or promoting economic activity. Those are good purpose or causes for government to go out and advertise. So the first part of the intent of the bill is to set standards, to set purposes out there for which governments undertake advertising.

The second part is to deal with the issue of partisanship in advertising. I'm going to speak about that in a minute or so, but it's clear that over many governments and many years, each government could be rightfully accused of having undertaken what is called partisan advertising at the expense of the taxpayer.

The third broad part of the act deals with control mechanisms; strategies by which, when the government is advertising, it does meet those standards, and to ensure that the partisan advertising that has occurred in the past is removed from the system.

Those are the primary intentions of Bill 25, and I'm pleased to speak to it.

We know that the previous government, during their eight years in office, spent tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money—no question about that—on clearly partisan advertising. Fliers known as householders were directly mailed to millions of homes in Ontario. I saw the stuff in my mailbox, and I think the number on each little piece was 3.1 cents, or was it 7.1 cents? I'm not sure what it was, but multiply times millions and then multiply times multiples, and the costs were enormous. As a matter of fact, it was exactly that advertising pre the last peekaboo election that was run for six months that drove

the need for this bill to be introduced early. It created the environment whereby the Premier said that within the first 100 days we would introduce legislation to deal with that matter. Our government fulfilled that obligation. The Chair of Management Board introduced this bill within that first 100 days and fulfilled the obligation we had set out for ourselves through the Premier.

The previous government, as I said, spent millions of dollars on partisan advertising. As a matter of fact, they had \$10 million set aside, \$10 million parked in a specific fund for that purpose; specifically partisan advertising in the form of householders. They didn't even hide the fact of what they were doing; they were quite deliberate about it and parked it for us all to see.

Nearly six years ago, in January 1999, the then leader of the opposition party, Dalton McGuinty, now the Premier, promised that a government led by him would introduce legislation to end taxpayer-funded political advertising, and that's what we did, very clearly. December 11 of last year, two months after being sworn in, the Chair of Management Board did just that and introduced this piece of legislation. Today we're here for third reading debate on this legislation and, if members of the House support it, looking forward to its passage.

During the previous government's mandate, any number of third parties spoke out about the partisan advertising that was going on. I know my constituents certainly spoke out quite clearly during the election period. I heard from them by e-mail, by phone, and I certainly heard it at the door, time and time again. Back as early as 1999, in addition to the now Premier, then leader, Mr Bradley wrote to the then Provincial Auditor, Erik Peters, and asked him to investigate the appropriateness of how taxpayers' dollars were being used in government advertising. Unfortunately, at that point the auditor didn't have any authority to undertake an investigation of that nature, and no authority to be able to stop what was happening. But in a letter to Mr Bradley dated March 25, 1999, he said the then government should consider drafting guidelines about what is and what isn't proper in government advertising.

A brief quote from the auditor's letter, if I may: "It would be in the interest of improving public accountability for the government and/or the Legislature to consider the establishment of principles, guidelines and criteria that clearly define the nature and characteristics of government advertising."

Was anything done at that point to act on the auditor's suggestion? No, clearly it wasn't. The government of the day snubbed its nose at that suggestion and snubbed its nose at the then Auditor General. Did the government of the day heed the auditor's sensible advice at that time? No, not at all. The most flagrant abuse occurred throughout the spring and summer of 2003 during the Tory peekaboo campaign. We waited and waited.

There is lots that could be said in respect to Bill 25 about why it should have the support of this Legislature. It clearly meets the expectations of the public. It clearly meets the standards of advertising. It deals with the

matter of partisanship and provides some control to the mechanism. Is any piece of legislation that comes forward perfect? No, and some of the suggestions and comments made that might expand it somewhat are probably appropriate, but we have a need to act now. This is good legislation and should have the support of this Legislature.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to rise and add a few comments on Bill 25. I think there are a couple of issues we need to identify in examining this bill. If you go back in time, all parties have done communications with the voters of Ontario, and it's a fine line, obviously, when you look at those communications. I certainly recall the NDP government, in its day, sending out wonderful glossy brochures about the work that the government of the day had done, and the previous government was no exception. So what we're looking at here is something that has been part of doing business for a long time.

I think the issue here is the fact that the government has chosen to try to put some boundaries around that, but when you start to examine these boundaries they have put around it, there become some problematic issues. I use as an example the material that was sent out—prior to this bill, obviously, because we are discussing it now—called *The Year in Review*. If we are going to have a new era of communications with our constituents in the province by the government, then I think we have to be looking at a document such as *The Year in Review* as an indicator of a new way of communicating with people in the province. Sadly, I don't see that that particular document provided us with any sense of the future nature of the communications that the government plans to introduce under this bill. When we look at the framework legislation, it becomes clear why it's possible.

1640

For instance, in *The Year in Review*, we have the Premier referring to it as a report card. Obviously, in defining it that way and in fact grading his government, he was seeing this as a vehicle for government relations as opposed to providing information for the balanced proposal of this new era. It did not deal with anything that was controversial. Obviously, it left major issues out of the discussion—the health tax, for instance—so we're still looking at making sure that any kind of document that goes out at public expense is still going to present the government in a most favourable light.

When you look at the details of the act itself, it seems to me that it's far more a question of lack of substance in fairly detailed issues around bureaucracy—a report by the auditor, and who's signed off, and things like that. It has very little substance—a lot of style. It certainly provides the government with an opportunity to say, in fact, that they have passed a bill that deals with government advertising, but in its own words it refers to it as framework legislation.

Framework legislation is not uncommon. It simply provides the government of the day with a way to provide regulations which aren't in a public discussion,

in a public forum. I think that in this particular bill, to have framework legislation offering a way of dealing with the details through regulation is really very unfortunate, because immediately what you are doing is saying, "Well, we have this framework legislation. We're going to be seen to be doing something about it. But by the way, the regulations will be done, as they always are, without public discussion, without a public forum and certainly not in this Legislature."

I think that the legislation we are debating here today is really a matter of public relations on the part of the government, as opposed to substance. I'm not quite sure that we're really going to see a great deal of difference in the kind of communication that will come forward from this government post the passing of this bill, any more than what we have seen so far.

I think there are a lot of questions—the use of the media outside Ontario—that have yet to be answered. I would suggest to people that we're probably not going to see a great deal of difference between the period prior to this legislation and that which will follow.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Unlike our predecessor, we are prepared to deliver real and positive changes by acting to ban partisan government advertising and renew public faith in our democracy and our government. The previous Tory government wasted millions of taxpayers' dollars on partisan, self-promotional government advertising. We are taking the government in a new direction and doing things differently; that is, putting the public interest first. This is a major departure, a major change.

The legislation being debated today will ensure that taxpayer dollars are not funding partisan advertising. Ontarians want their hard-earned tax dollars used to serve them instead of serving partisan political interests. Every dollar spent on self-serving partisan advertisement is a dollar less for our classrooms, our health care system, our water inspectors and our public transportation.

We are putting years of Tory mismanagement behind us and taking our government in a new and better direction by introducing more transparency, accountability and fiscal responsibility for everything we do as a government. We are committed to restoring the public's faith in our democratic institutions by making government more accountable, transparent and fiscally responsible. That is our strategy.

This groundbreaking legislation, I believe the first of its kind, is part of our government's pledge to deliver an agenda for positive change. Our government made an election promise and a throne speech commitment to eliminate the waste of taxpayers' dollars on partisan political advertising. That is what this legislation will do. Management Board Secretariat will work with the Democratic Renewal Secretariat to bring greater transparency and accountability to the government.

The previous Tory government wasted millions of taxpayers' dollars on self-promotional government advertising. In fact, in 1999 specifically, the production of this

type of householder by the Tories cost us \$10 million. Our bill will eliminate that; it won't happen.

We are committed to reporting the cost of advertising. The cost of advertising campaigns would be made public as part of the Provincial Auditor's annual report. The total cost of an ad is often not known until the campaign has run its course.

As the member for Thornhill and Concord, I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to being fiscally responsible and investing our dollars back in our schools, our health care and our public transportation.

Those are my comments on Bill 25.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I think at the time that Bill 25 was introduced, Mr Phillips said it was trying to show some sort of non-partisan initiative. But to the member who has just spoken, it should be on the record that I'd encourage him to do a little bit more research. Don't just read the notes they give you to read. I'm going to give you some information that will help you to see just how unfair it is.

I made some remarks on this, in response, as I was the critic for Management Board. It says, if you look to history, to the numbers, "Between 1985 and 1990"—this is when Mr Peterson was the Premier of the province of Ontario for that very brief time—"the average spending on advertising by the then Liberal government" was \$71.2 million. The NDP, right after that, surprisingly became the leadership, and they spent \$70 million. You should know, for the record, that between 1995 and 2000, we spent \$58 million.

Now, why we spent \$58 million should become some part of the substance of the debate. During that time, we inherited a huge, huge deficit, like \$12 billion, which was approximately 20% of the total spending of the government. There was a huge communications deficit, because the last thing on people's mind was the social contract; prior to that, with Mr Peterson, it was basically the Meech Lake accord. What we were trying to do was turn Ontario back to a period of prosperity. I think it's still evident today that as a result of the actions of rebuilding Ontario's economy, there was much that had to be communicated to the people of Ontario, the motive for why we were making the changes we made. So I think, respectfully, to the member who has just spoken, I wanted to correct the record.

But now, when I really get forward, I just randomly picked out of my desk several of these new—of course, they're non-partisan. It's a subliminal message. They've moved from straightforward communication to a kind of blurring of the line in telling the important content.

1650

Mrs Munro: It's subliminal.

Mr O'Toole: It's subliminal. That's the word that has been moved. I'm not sure if it's a parliamentary term that's accepted. Then they try to brand things by saying, "The government for change." The question should have been, on the back of these brochures, "Change to what?"

I met this morning, and have been meeting with all along, some of the victims of your health policy and

strategy. Those victims could be in the form of health care providers like chiropractors, optometrists and physio-therapist, or in fact they could be the recipients, my constituents and yours, who are now paying a health tax and are now paying for delisted services. They are paying more and getting less. So I introduced a bill today.

Bill 25, by and large—we would say that the big question that remains here is when it receives royal assent. You, in the parliamentary tradition, cannot say, "When passed"; you should say, "If passed." You'll ram this thing through. I understand that. You will ram it, you will force it through on the people of Ontario, however unimportant the bill is. But what I'm going to watch quite carefully is when you actually implement it. The terror that you're wreaking on the OMA and the hospitals right now—you're going to have to advertise; you're advertising now.

Mr Phillips, as the Chair of Management Board—I have the greatest respect for him—knows that you're going to have to convince the public that your Draconian measures against the OMA are justifiable, and you're going to call it government communication. Well, I call it government politics. By any other name, they're going to try and convince the public, through some form of media or communication, that this is the right thing to do.

I would love to know just how much they paid Roy Romanow to make the statement, just in case, that this was the right thing to do. I would suggest to you that all parties have a responsibility to communicate. I just think of two or three reasons that all of you would agree with me if you were listening. I'm listening. I'm watching for response.

The first thing we had was the BSE outbreak, which caused havoc and hardship amongst the agricultural community. Of course, we had a duty and a responsibility to communicate a strategy and a response to that necessity. We also had the blackout, which was from a transmission problem in the States. We had a tremendous communications challenge. Then we had SARS, which was another communications and strategic challenge, which you tried to vilify as partisan advertising. It was for the safety and well-being of the people of Ontario. Mr Speaker, you would agree as well, although I'm sure in that seat you're non-partisan. I know that you will listen patiently.

Governments of whatever stripe have a duty to communicate with the people of Ontario. The subliminal message that was referred to is the colour of these things, the subtle wording of the word "change," all of these subliminal, kind of suggestive linkages between the political mandate on which you run and the reality. People of Ontario, I'm not encouraging you to become cynical about it, but this government—

What I'm going to be watching very carefully is that when this is proclaimed, will it be after the OMA is forced back to work or after the hospitals are forced to cut services? Is it going to be after the next budget? Mr Speaker, I'm still waiting to even get a straight answer to when it would be proclaimed.

It will be a forced vote. They'll be rounded up to vote like a bunch of lambs, I would think Monday, and I would say it could easily become law that day, Monday, which would prevent Mr Sorbara from trying to explain what he intends to do in the next budget.

My intention here this afternoon is to point out to the people of Ontario that, by and large, we didn't ever spend as much as the previous Liberals on government advertising. That's the record: \$58 million versus \$70 million-plus. Adjusted for inflation, it would be less than half of what they spent under Peterson. So be aware. There's one message you should keep posted to your refrigerator: "Liberals will spend more and you'll get less." Liberals are tax-and-spend. The record speaks for itself. Look at the ad scandal going on in Ottawa. They're the masters. This here is the junior B hockey team of the Liberals.

Honest to God, we'll have a bigger deficit, a bigger debt, and it won't be called government advertising. It's called government reality. But at the end of the day, respectfully to Mr Phillips, I support the intent of the bill. I support the fact that the people of Ontario don't want any one-dollar or 100-dollar bills spent unnecessarily, but government does have a duty to communicate to all of the constituents, the residents of Ontario.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Did Mike Harris really have more time on air than Larry King? The former government spent a staggering \$300 million of Ontario taxpayers' money on its report to taxpayers, politically laden pulp and its broadcast equivalent. But the people of Ontario didn't buy the message and they couldn't stomach the medium, so they elected a new government.

We said we'd put a stop to taxpayer-financed political propaganda, and Bill 25 is a key promise kept. What does Bill 25 mean in day-to-day terms? It means that the \$300 million that we've saved, that we won't spend on TV commercials, on newspaper ads, brochures and other promotions, helps pay for an increase in the minimum wage.

I asked teenagers across Ontario, "Which would you rather have: an increase in the minimum wage that so many of you work for or some colourful lining for the cat box?" I asked elementary teachers across Ontario, "Which would you rather have: the smaller class sizes that so many of you now enjoy today or an ad campaign on the feel-good aspects of health care with US stock photos?"

This is easy. Government in Ontario now has a bit more money because Ontarians know their government has stopped this unconscionable wholesale waste of their tax money. That's what Bill 25 is already doing, because the government of Ontario has lived up to the intent of Bill 25 for more than a year now.

Bill 25 is more than good policy; it's good sense. It's groundbreaking legislation. In fact, the only groundbreaking that will make me prouder as an MPP will be to join with my colleagues the member from Mississauga Centre and the Minister of Transportation, and do a groundbreaking on the new Lisgar GO train station. I

didn't get a chance to read my petition this afternoon, so I thought I'd add that to the debate.

Bill 25, when passed, will require the Provincial Auditor to report annually to the Legislative Assembly on government advertising expenditures. But the teeth in Bill 25 is the requirement by the Provincial Auditor to report on the contraventions of this bill. Speaker, just like your rulings in this chamber, the Provincial Auditor's determination is final. If the Provincial Auditor says it looks like partisan advertising, if it reads or sounds like partisan advertising, then it's partisan advertising and someone will answer for it in this chamber.

I look forward to the speedy passage of Bill 25, and I proudly support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Further proceedings on this matter will be deferred to the end of the afternoon.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE
LAW AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY), 2004
LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES)

Mr Takhar moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Minister?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I rise in the House today to introduce third reading of a bill to protect the most vulnerable in our society: our children and youth. Nearly one in five people killed on Ontario's roads are 19 or under. We can, and we will, change that terrible statistic. The proposed legislation before the House would protect our young from the cradle to adulthood by (1) improving the use of child car seats and booster seats, (2) increasing school bus safety and (3) improving the graduated licensing system.

An appropriate child car seat can mean the difference between life and death for infants, toddlers and primary grade children. A properly used child car seat can reduce the risk of death or serious injury by as much as 75%.

1700

Speaker, I forgot to say that I will be sharing my time with two of my colleagues, my parliamentary assistant, the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, and the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Here is a quote from a Barrie OPP officer: "I have seen a vehicle roll over several times and the child was secured in the car seat, hanging upside down but totally safe." If passed, this bill would add demerit points to the

penalty facing drivers who fail to follow infant and toddler car seat requirements, and not just parents and legal guardians. Anyone who transports a child in a motor vehicle must be held responsible for the safety of that child. This bill, if passed, would ensure that is the case.

Here is another terrible statistic: Children using seat belts instead of booster seats are three and a half times more likely to suffer significant injury in a crash. That is why booster seats will be mandatory. It is such a simple way of saving and protecting the lives of our children.

This proposed legislation would also build on existing school bus safety measures. It would allow charges to be laid against the owner of a vehicle that is reported to have illegally passed a stopped school bus with its overhead red signal light flashing. One-third of school bus drivers report that they have seen at least one car illegally passing a stopped school bus every day, according to a recent Transport Canada survey.

I am very grateful to my colleague Pat Hoy, MPP for Chatham-Kent Essex, who has campaigned and championed tirelessly to improve school bus safety, and to the families who lost children in school bus collisions. The legislation I am introducing today, if passed, would help prevent this tragedy from happening to any more families in Ontario.

New teenage drivers are almost three times more likely than new drivers over 20 to be involved in a fatal or serious collision if they have three or more teenaged passengers. The proposed legislation would allow the regulation to restrict the number of young passengers a driver aged 19 and under can carry during and after their first six months in the G2 level.

As one Peterborough county OPP constable put it, "I really and truly believe it will lessen the risk of disturbances in the car." It is important to note that these restrictions would not apply if the G2 driver is 19 and under, and is accompanied by an experienced driver in the front seat. In addition, family members would be exempt from this restriction, regardless of age.

The measures that I have proposed recognize the need of all Ontarians to travel freely, but our government has a responsibility to ensure safety above all else. We owe it to our children and youth.

In conclusion, Ontario has the safest track record in Canada in terms of safety. Our government is determined to make sure that we keep it that way. The measures have the support of the Infant and Toddler Safety Association, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Public Health Association, St John's Ambulance, the Toronto Police Service, the OPP, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Safety League.

I really want to take this opportunity to invite all my colleagues on both sides of the House to support our government's measure to protect our children and youth on Ontario's roads.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to say at the outset, as I did at second reading, that we will be supporting this bill. We see this bill as definitely a

step in the right direction when it comes to the safety of children in cars and school buses. We know this has been an issue that has been ongoing.

I want to give some credit to the member from Chatham-Kent Essex, who has been one of the champions on this, along with the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. They have come to this House a number of times to try to deal with this issue. I know the member from Chatham-Kent Essex brought forward legislation dealing with school buses. I think my good friend Mr Lalonde did so as well. I want to make sure they get some credit for what was, initially, a couple of private members' bills while they were in opposition. It's good to see the government has decided to make this a government initiative.

However, I think it raises the issue of private members' bills. Very often people in this House—all honourable members, every one of us—have a particular issue brought to us by constituents in our constituency, or in the greater constituency of Ontario, and we are asked to come forward with legislation to deal with it. They know that trying to get a government to sponsor legislation can sometimes be difficult, because a government has a finite amount of time in its mandate, and in the time it has in the House, to move legislation through the House. It raises the issue—this particular bill gives us an opportunity to think about this—of how are we able to change the rules in this place to give private members a better ability to not only introduce bills, to not only to be able to debate a bill for an hour and possibly get it passed at second reading, but more importantly, to get a bill passed in this House?

I have to believe, for example, that the member from Chatham-Kent Essex, who championed part of the initiatives in this bill while in opposition, did a whole bunch of work on this. He did a lot of consultation with the people in his community and the greater community of Ontario. He came to this House, looked for support, did the research, did the discussion needed with various stakeholders, and came forward with a bill that, unfortunately, the government was never able to support when he was in opposition, but fortunately for him, we can support it now that he is in government. It raises the point, how do we make this place work?

I thought it would be an interesting point to make in this debate because I think there are some things we could do. For example, we could look at extending the sittings of this House in the mornings to have an additional private members' hour. That would be one way to do it.

I know the federal House of Commons has changed its private members' system. You would know, Mr Speaker, that it used to be in the federal House of Commons that you had to go before a committee to decide if your bill was votable or not, which I always thought was kind of wonky. Now we have a minority Parliament in Ottawa and they have basically done what we now have in Ontario, which is, I think, a far better system. But just because somebody has finally caught up to our juris-

diction doesn't mean we have to stay there. Should we try to find more ways for private members to participate?

The other issue is members of cabinet. For example, a member like Minister Takhar, our Minister of Transportation, is limited in what he can introduce in the House. He can introduce only transportation bills. Does the member, as a private member, let alone a minister, have particular issues that are near and dear to his heart that he would like to bring into this House? I think, somehow or other, we need to think about how we can do that.

Another way we would be able to achieve this—I think Bill 73, again, gives us an opportunity to reflect on that—is, when ministers of the crown bring legislation forward, is it necessarily the best mechanism to table a bill at second reading to get a debate, to get it into committee when all the decisions have been made? I give the government some credit, and the previous government under the Conservatives, for when they introduced bills at first reading and said, “Here is a bill at first reading.” I know the then House leader—I think it was John Baird under the Conservatives—had a couple of bills where they actually did that. They said, “Here is a bill. Let's introduce it as first reading. Let's send it off to committee, allow the committee to do some work, and then we'll bring it back for debate at second reading,” without everybody firmly planting their heels in the ground as to what side—they followed various issues within the bill. I think that was certainly a step forward. I give the government some credit. They tried to do that in this new Parliament, and it's worked to a degree. The greenbelt legislation, by and large, has been a bill that has to a certain extent been developed by members of the opposition, but not to the degree that I think the Conservatives or we as New Democrats feel comfortable with.

1710

It raises the issue: Should we find a way to refer policy areas to committee? For example, if a minister of the crown such as our good friend Mr Takhar, the Minister of Transportation, says, “I am concerned about school bus safety. I am concerned about the graduated driver's licence system. I am concerned about speed on our highways. I am concerned about a number of Highway Traffic Act amendments that could make our highways safer,” would it not be a better use of parliamentary time to say, “Let's refer the policy area to a standing committee”? The standing committee can do a review of the current legislation and try to figure out how you capture the ideas that are being put forward by the minister, and then canvas the other 102 members of the House, and in the process we consult with our constituents, about how to put together a bill that deals with a number of policy questions within a particular policy area.

For example, you may have a Minister of Transportation who refers the matter of safety on our highways and roads to a standing committee. Then, through a process of standing committee hearings, you deal with the issue by listening to what people have to say about some of the things we can do to make our Highway Traffic Act work better and make our highways and

roads in Ontario safer, and then draft a bill based on those discussions.

It would mean you would have a bill before this House that is certainly bigger than the bill we've got now, but I would argue, for the government House leader, it would also make better use of House time. Rather than coming to the Legislature and this Parliament, it will probably come with Minister Takhar's bills and we'll probably see some amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, three, four, maybe five times in the life of this Parliament. That's certainly been the case every time. This is the fourth or fifth Parliament that I've been privileged to serve in and each and every time a minister will bring amendments to an act more than once.

My argument is that by referring the policy matter out to a standing committee and allowing it to look at the overall policy issues raised by the minister and any other member, you can bring a much more comprehensive bill back to the House, with some agreement from the parties about being able to pass it through the House in a fairly speedy manner. That way, rather than having five or six bills debated in the House, you can end up with one government bill that is basically developed by consensus within the committee process to deal with the various issues. It's just an idea. Maybe that's not the best approach. It's just my attempt at trying to figure out how you find ways of giving individual members a larger role in developing public policy.

Specifically on this bill, just for the record, there are a couple of issues I'd like to raise—in no particular order.

The first one I want to deal with is the issue of the owner of a vehicle being charged because the owner's vehicle has been spotted passing a school bus with flashing red lights. Do we agree that there should be a prohibition against people passing school buses when the red lights are flashing? Obviously, yes. Everybody agrees. Is this a way of deterring people from passing a school bus when the red lights are flashing? Probably yes, to most, I would argue. But I'm not convinced—because I've been through this debate now two or three times—that ticketing the owner of the vehicle is necessarily the best way to do it.

Let me give you an example. If I'm the owner of the vehicle and I'm driving my vehicle down the road and I know I can get caught for passing a school bus with its lights flashing, I'm less likely to do it if I know there is a fairly hefty fine. It's the fear of getting caught that will stop me from doing the action. It's never really the fine itself; it's the fear that you may get caught. If I think I can get away, with impunity, as the case is now—because as it is, the police officer has to catch you red-handed in the action of passing a bus with flashing lights. Unfortunately there are a lot of people out there who figure the cops aren't around. “I'm going to do it. I'm in a hurry. I've got to get from point A to point B.”

Clearly the bill is going to deal with those drivers or owners of cars. You drive your car, Speaker. You're not about to do this for fear of getting caught. But if I'm an irresponsible individual—and believe me, there are many

of them out there—who happens to have borrowed somebody's car, what the hell do they care? I'm going to be real blunt about it: What do they care?

Somebody all of a sudden comes by and says, "Gilles, can I borrow your truck? I've got to go bring something to the dump." If I know the person well enough, a fellow cottager or somebody in my neighbourhood, I might say, "Yeah, here are my keys. Go." All of a sudden that person takes off, sees a bus with flashing lights and says, "I'm going anyway. It's not me who's going to get caught." And away they go, and they cause an infraction of the Highway Traffic Act. The person is more likely to do that if they feel that they as the driver can't get caught.

The problem is that under this act part of the issue that the government is trying to deal with is dealt with if the owner and the driver happen to be the same, but that's not the case if the driver is not the owner. I'm not convinced that saying, "All right, Mr Bisson, you lent your car. Your car was spotted. We've got the licence plate number. You're getting the ticket," in itself is going to fix the problem. You have to have some kind of a mechanism that forces the owner to turn over the person that he or she lent the car to. I don't see that in the legislation.

I'm not clear how you do that, because we haven't spent a lot of time at committee on that particular issue, but we need some sort of a mechanism to get the owner to turn the information over. If I, as the owner, say, "I lent my car to Joe Schmo," and Joe Schmo gets ticketed, the owner is not ticketed—I guess that's what I'm saying. But if I don't want to turn over whoever I lent the car to, then I would be made responsible.

It's a point that somebody raised in my constituency one day as I was traveling on the many hours of highways that I have to do in my constituency. In fact, I'm going to be driving nine hours on Saturday to go to three meetings. I don't know what you guys are doing on Saturday, but that's what I'm doing. I wish the weather was nice and I could—

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): We're not that goofy.

Mr Bisson: Not that goofy? Well, I happen to have a pretty big riding. I guess that makes me goofy.

I would say that I'm not sure the way that this is particularly set up—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Who said "goofy"?

Mr Bisson: I know. I didn't think it was a very bright comment, but he's a nice guy. Mr Peterson, I've got to say, is a nice man. I respect him, and I know he meant it as a joke. I'm not going to go ballistic about having to service a large riding. I know where it came from. He meant it as—

Mr Peterson: I'd be happy to withdraw it.

Mr Bisson: I know you would, and I'm not taking big exception to it. I understand what you were saying. You were just having a bit of fun with me. That's allowed. We shouldn't take ourselves too seriously.

Interjection: We shouldn't take him seriously.

Mr Bisson: No, we shouldn't take ourselves too seriously.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Yeah, you did. I heard him withdraw. He apologized. That's fine. I'm digressing now, my friend.

The point is that I'm saying it would be nice to have some sort of an amendment in that legislation that could have done that. That's all I'm saying.

The issue of car seats: Listen, I've got to agree with you. How many times have we gone through this debate in this province? I've had people come to me and say, "I don't want to be forced to have to put a car seat in my vehicle for driving a child. I feel safe enough just buckling him up in the belts." We know the stats show that there are a lot of fatalities and a lot of serious injuries to young people because they are not in proper car seats. The only thing I'm going to say to that, like I said to those people, "I remember the debate when we said wearing motorcycle helmets was a bad thing. I remember it, because I was a young man driving a motorcycle when motorcycle helmet laws came into the province of Ontario."

Mr Hudak: Did you rebel?

Mr Bisson: Listen, I rebelled. Obviously, I did. I thought, "Who is the government of Ontario to tell me?" At the time I guess it was Bill Davis who was the Premier, or whoever it was before him, Mr Frost—well, it couldn't have been Frost; I would have been too young. Who was the Premier in about 1971-72?

Mr Hudak: Davis was 1971.

Mr Bisson: Was it still Davis? OK.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, I know it was a Conservative; I can't go wrong there.

Interjection: It should always be a Conservative.

Mr Bisson: It shouldn't always be a Conservative, but it was at that time.

My point is that we all rebelled. We said, "That's a terrible thing. They're taking away my freedom. God, that's awful." You know what? I wouldn't go in my yard on my motorcycle today without wearing a helmet. I think it's much the same argument about this here, that sometimes—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): What about your skateboard?

Mr Bisson: You wouldn't catch me on a skateboard; I'd kill myself, especially on the driveway out at the lake. Oh God, that would be tough.

The point I make is this: Far too often, when legislators sometimes put forward legislation like this, safety measures to protect the public, we often as individual citizens see that as an affront to our freedoms and our ability to make our own choices. I kind of understand where people are coming from, but we listened to a debate in this House about a month ago where a member of the House—I forget who it was—put forward legislation that people riding bicycles over the age of 18 should be forced to wear a helmet.

1720

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): The member from Kitchener.

Mr Bisson: The member from Kitchener.

We listened to Mr Prue, who, members in this House probably didn't know, lost his brother. He was almost 50 years old at the time. He got on his bicycle to get a quart of milk, something happened, the bike fell, and his brother died of a head injury. As Mr Prue says, "Listen, I don't want to hear about it any more. I've been through this. I understand what it's all about. I've lost a brother because he was not wearing a helmet."

All I'm saying, in this legislation, is that I hear what some of the people have told me. They have said we should oppose this bill because they see this as an infringement of their rights, but the reality is, so does a child have a right, and we need to make sure we do the right thing for citizens, including the children of the province. So on that particular point, I've got to say to the government, I'm with you on that. I think that is a step in the right direction.

I don't have a lot of time, but on the graduated driver's licence amendments that you're making, I understand why you're making them. I ain't going to fight 'em. I've heard arguments equally on both sides of that one. We'll default to the side of safety. I guess what this is all about is making sure we don't have young people piling in their friends and going cruising somewhere and not having the experience or the comfort to be able to drive in a way that makes all those people safe. I'm just wondering, though, are we going a little bit too far on that one? Possibly. Anyway, I'm prepared to give you support generally on the bill, and that was about the only one I had some problem with.

I just wanted to put those comments on the record. As I say, we have no problem supporting this particular initiative, and we look forward to the government coming back with other sizzling legislation that we can stand in this House and speak to.

Mr O'Toole: It's a pleasure to stand and respond to the discussion on Bill 73, another bill that will be forced on the people of Ontario, some with good intentions and some with questionable intentions. And that's my intention here, to cover both sides, because no issue is that simple and straightforward that there aren't many sides to it.

My train of thought, respectfully, always goes to my constituents in the riding of Durham, and what I'm hearing and seeing from them. I do listen to the civil servants, of course. They are well intended, but they need direction and management. Quite often, this is what's missing from Dalton McGuinty and the crew there.

The member from Chatham-Kent Essex, Mr Hoy, has tried relentlessly to make this bill law, and I think, respectfully, Mr Takhar, the minister, has recognized that. I give him credit for that, because Mr Hoy has done a lot of work on that, with the right intentions, although some of the implementation I had difficulty with, and that is the issue of passing school buses. Mr Speaker, you, as a practising lawyer—well, I don't think you're practising right now, but usually you do. You need a lot of practice, too, at times.

The point there is that it's one of those reverse-onus issues. As you know, what they're going to do now is issue a ticket or some kind of notice. If you pass a school bus, which is wrong and forbidden and shouldn't happen, and if you, as the driver of the vehicle, aren't the owner of the vehicle, it's the owner of the vehicle who gets the ticket. They're then in the unenviable position of having to pay the fine—\$1,000, I think it is. That has caused some concern. I would say it's a weakness in administration that I see continuously here.

Also, I just want to say for the record, I have spoken for some time—because I had the privilege to speak on this bill—with Jim Wilson, a former minister of several ministries; a very capable guy and a person I have grown to respect. He is also the critic for transportation. He's made some comments on this, as has Frank Klees.

Frank Klees, you may recall, raised the issue of carpooling, and the issue of an unforeseen emergency: children out in the cold on a winter day. It could be this December or January. It could be my grandchildren. I'll get to that, too, because I always like to cover my family on this. For instance, if the bus had somehow been unable to make it to the school, and there are children there, and I'm there with my van—or my wife would be at the school because she's a teacher—

Mr Leal: And a great teacher.

Mr O'Toole: A very good teacher, in fact. I'd say Mr Leal is correct there. I can't say that all the time, but this time I will.

The point I'm trying to make is that she would not be able to rescue those children from the cold. The school could be locked because they may have thought the bus was going to be there on time, and they could not legally take the children. Now, that doesn't seem to allow much flexibility. But again, I know I hear from my constituents—and I'm going to get to that. Mr Klees raised that point. Where are the three children who could be left in the cold? That has not been responded to. I challenge the minister, in his two-minute summation, to tell us what to do with those children who have been left because the volunteer who would have, in all due course of safety, tried to get the children home to their parents who are fretting and worrying couldn't do it because of the Liberal government's poorly articulated legislation.

The other comment I want to make with respect to my peers here at Queen's Park is about Garfield Dunlop, the member from Simcoe North, who is the critic for the community safety and correctional ministry. He has a very valid concern too. Here we are downloading—I use the word—responsibilities to the enforcement people, our police officers in our communities. Actually, here's another case where I just ask very normal administrative questions. It appears now that, rather than carrying pepper spray and a baton and maybe a Taser gun, they're going to have to carry scales to weigh the children, because it's very specific in regulation. They're also going to have to carry a tape measure to measure the child. Mr Dunlop has raised some very valid concerns. These are all part of the implementation cobweb, a night-

mare that this government hasn't thought through. Now they're trying to force it through without any further debate. In fact, they had a one-day committee, which lasted for less than an hour, to amend the bill. I was looking forward to further amendments.

This is a very particular e-mail, and since it's on e-mail, I'm going to read it. These are my constituents. It's a real letter I'm reading here. I do read them and, thank you, stay in touch. My e-mail is always available. My constituency office in Durham, at 75 King Street East, is always there to listen and respond to your concerns.

This one went on to say, "My son Maverick is five years old, 49 inches tall and 60 pounds"—these are their words, and I'm quoting it; I'll have to give this to Hansard because I want to get it correct—"so according to Dalton he should be in a booster seat. Except if I did this in a 1988 Dodge regular cab pickup truck with a bench seat, his head could hit off the back window during a sudden stop if he were in a booster seat. This would probably be the same in many full- and mid-size pickup trucks, with a bench seat, with no headrest in the middle seat. This would be far worse than having him sitting properly on the seat with his belt on, with his head properly protected."

So there are many vehicles where retrofitting would create a problem. That's what my constituent is telling me, and I am listening. That is from Blaine Sleep, who is at 3515 Church Street. I don't think I've heard from him before. I think this is a very good letter.

This is another one, from Jill MacIntosh. It's a letter to the editor. She's very outraged about this—"booster seats save lives"—and I would be supporting it from listening to people like Jill, because she puts a very positive spin on it.

Also with respect to my riding, this was a recent article in the Durham Times, and it says here they want to thank Cowan Pontiac Buick Ltd, the Kiwanis Clubs of Durham region, the Durham Region Car Safety Seat Committee and Durham regional police for sponsoring an event. This event, which was free, checked safety seats. The implementation, not just purchasing the seat—it's a tax by any other name when you force people to make an expenditure. It's perhaps needed; we need more discussion on that, I suspect. Having raised five children, I would never have been able to put all the seats in a car, because they were quite close in age. I probably could have had two cars, so not only would I have had to buy the car seats, I would have had to buy two cars.

So there are many difficult issues in here. By and large, my own response personally—and Mr Takhar has spoken on this. But the issue here is that trying to enforce this becomes quite problematic. I'm just going to run through a couple of—Speaker, you're paying attention, and I notice that.

1730

The two things that I was going to say—I'm a school bus driver, let's presume. I have a route and my route is on a certain number of streets each day for the 190 school-teaching days of the year. In that neighbourhood I

have, the route that I pass through, I notice that there are similar drivers all the time trying to go to work at the same time. So there might be a little bit of conflict, personality conflicts, maybe, between the driver of the bus and the driver of a certain vehicle that's always trying to get slightly ahead of the bus. And maybe the bus driver could just, inadvertently, in a bad-tempered mood, take down the number and send it in, but in fact the person didn't pass the bus when the arm was out—as they should, and as I encourage all Ontarians to do, to obey the law. But now the driver of the vehicle—who may have been one of the children in the family, it may have been the owner of the vehicle—got the ticket. Now it's up to them to prove that they didn't pass the bus. Now what have you got? You've got the lawyer—that's probably going to cost you a couple thousand dollars; you've got the fine—a thousand bucks; and you've got this day in court—you lose pay. It's going to cost \$5,000, possibly. That may be low, depending on how severe.

These little conflicts create problems, so there has to be a resolution process. That's all I'm bringing to the minister's attention. Make sure there's an adequate resolution process. And I think an implementation—again, this is one of the things you have to take into stead.

I think always of my constituents. It's part of how and why I enjoy doing this public service function. In this case here, I'm thinking of the booster seat issue and the pickup of children. In my case—I'm going to make it very personal. I've said this before, and I'm very, very flattered. For Christmas, my daughter and her husband, with our two grandchildren, just arrived from Australia. To pick them up at the airport, we have to have two vehicles, because you can only get two car seats in the back seat and two in the front. There are two children and two adults, plus myself and my wife. That means two cars.

We were thinking of buying a van. Of course, it would be a GM Astro van, because they're probably the best, most efficient vans on the road today. I worked at GM for 30 years, so I have some knowledge of that. I would encourage all members to go out and consider that, if that's the choice they need.

The real issue, though, for me, is just the practicality of implementation. I am looking through my notes here for the copy of the bill, because I do have it here—lock the doors, somebody has taken my bill. I think I can survive without it. I know I have it here—open the doors, the bill has been found.

Introduced in May. I spoke to the minister earlier this evening. He clarified for me a couple of the questions I had, and I was satisfied with that—a good minister because he's helped me out a great deal on a number of issues. "Section 7 is amended to provide that if an owner convicted of the offence of failing to stop for a school bus with its overhead red signal lights flashing fails to pay the fine imposed on the conviction, the owner's vehicle permit may not be validated," and the new permit would not be permitted. So you've got this huge problem which I described—a huge fine, the lawyer, the day at

court, and all the stuff. All I really want is reassurance today; there needs to be a dispute resolution mechanism.

Now in fairness, my cousin Mike O'Toole—

Mr Leal: I know him well, a good friend of mine.

Mr O'Toole: Jeff Leal knows him well, an excellent person. David Peterson appointed him as a justice of the peace. He did run for the Liberals. I think, possibly, that that may be one of the wrong turns in life, but nonetheless, potentially, he would be sitting in his chamber. He is very fair-minded, reasonable, and he would want to err on the side of safety, so he'd just say, "Guilty as charged." And it turns out, as I described earlier, that that may not have been the case. It might not have been quite so simple. There may have been a bit of background that I described, just a bit of bad feeling between the bus driver and the person who, on each day of the 190 days, may have been trying to just get ahead of the bus—maybe inappropriately, maybe even in infraction of the speed a bit. Those are the things I continually think of.

I believe that the thin edge of the wedge here that was always in everyone's mind was that they were trying surreptitiously to sneak in photo radar again. Minister Takhar and the Premier disagreed on that on a couple of different press days, you may recall, Mr Speaker, because you read most of the press clippings. I've seen you reading them here. In fact, I saw you reading them today.

The point is that in many cases the news reports on this bill haven't been too exaggerated. The issue I'm speaking of is that the government intends to pass regulations restricting teenaged novice drivers to only one passenger. There are some issues within that part of the bill as well.

People living in the country and restrictions on the G licensing system is another concern: how many passengers, how you prove who they are, how old they are. Members of the family are exempt. There is a whole bunch of minutiae in that section.

But on the photo radar thing, I'm still not clear. I think they're going to download the responsibility on red light cameras. Red light cameras are Big Brother. I hate to say it. We wonder where the front-line policing is on this issue.

I was asking my daughter, the one who just came from Australia, about seat belts in Australia. I think the fine for running a red light—and they're all camera-ed. The cameras down there work for both. They do photo radar and the red-light camera thing, and the fine is like \$4,000. It's just enormous.

If the civil service perhaps has a revenue problem going into the future, and maybe the fine is only \$1,000 now, maybe it will just be \$2,000, and pretty soon you have government havoc on the people of Ontario. These things worry me from time to time.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Hudak is asking—and he's been doing a marvellous job on Bill 135. Minister Gerretsen has refused to respond to simply more hearings. Once again—

Mr Hudak: I'll ask for it. "Get it right."

We want to get the legislation right. We intend to support every issue that involves public safety. With respect to the greenbelt legislation that I mentioned, Bill 135, I am quite supportive of it. I know Mr Tory is quite passionate about having preserves of green space, as we were under the Oak Ridges moraine.

But under this bill there has to be a mechanism to ensure there's fairness with passing the school buses, as I've described, with the enforcement mechanism with police officers—now there aren't enough police officers because they're really not giving them a thousand front-line police officers—to enforce this downloaded thing of enforcement. I don't know how they're going to enforce the G2 licensing, who's in the car, who's related, who's a brother, who's exempted. These enforcement, what I'd call administrative, issues are of concern. I think more hearings are warranted.

In conclusion, I want to say that the minister has helped greatly in trying to advance the importance of Highway 407 through the region of Durham. It's the ribbon of the economy. He knows it, I know it and Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham region, and most of the mayors agree. I know Wayne Arthurs is here tonight and I'm surprised at that too. Anyway, he's here. The last I heard, Mr Arthurs was actually in the back of a van in the parking lot at the hearing on Bill 135. There were a lot of people at the meeting who were concerned, but he's here tonight, and I'm pleased to support the discussion.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Ça me fait grandement plaisir de prendre part au débat de ce projet de loi 73, qui comporte sur la sécurité de nos enfants, ainsi que la sécurité routière pour tous ceux et toutes celles circulant sur nos routes canadiennes.

Ce projet de loi a trois composantes. La première est les exigences relatives aux sièges des enfants. La deuxième : conducteur ayant omis « de s'arrêter pour un autobus scolaire dont les feux rouges supérieurs clignotent ». Cette partie-là, je vais la laisser à mon collègue le député de Chatham-Kent-Essex, parce que c'est vraiment lui qui a parrainé ce projet de loi-là. La troisième : restrictions réglementaires imposées aux conducteurs débutants.

1740

J'ai écouté les membres de l'opposition nous dire que—la partie sur les conducteurs débutants, de quelle façon allons-nous l'appliquer? Laissez-moi vous dire que, actuellement aux États-Unis, 17 États ont déjà des restrictions pour les conducteurs débutants. Au Canada, nous en avons quatre actuellement, qui sont la Colombie-Britannique, le Manitoba, l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard et le Yukon.

Pourquoi avons-nous décidé d'inclure dans le projet de loi cette partie? Tout d'abord, je vais vous lire les parties qui comprennent les conducteurs débutants.

« L'article 57.1 est modifié pour autoriser la prise de règlements qui prescrivent les qualités requises pour l'obtention d'un permis de conducteur débutant.

« Le nouvel article 57.1.1 autorise un agent de police et un autre agent d'application de la loi à demander au

passager d'un véhicule conduit par un conducteur débutant de s'identifier pour déterminer si ce dernier contrevient à une condition ou à une restriction réglementaire imposée aux conducteurs débutants. »

Nous savons que, actuellement pour un conducteur de moins de 16 ans—oui, je dis bien 16 ans—les chances d'être impliqué dans un accident majeur sont de 2,3 % plus élevées que pour un conducteur de 20 ans. Pour le conducteur de 17 ans qui n'a pas son permis de conduire G2 après avoir passé son année d'essai, le pourcentage d'accidents est de 2,02 % plus élevé que pour un conducteur de 20 ans.

Cela veut dire que lorsque nous regardons, nous avons environ 7 % de plus de chances d'avoir un accident par une personne qui n'a pas passé ce qu'on appelle en français les grands permis. Les grands permis : c'est une personne qui a obtenu son G2, qui a eu une période d'essai pendant 12 mois sans infraction. Si elle a eu une infraction, elle n'est définitivement pas autorisée à renouveler son G2 avant d'avoir passé un an au complet sans avoir des contraventions ou avoir été arrêtée pour d'autres infractions.

En Ontario, nous avons le meilleur record au Canada pour le nombre d'accidents mortels. Si je regarde l'Ontario sur toutes les provinces que j'ai devant moi—c'est un rapport qui a été remis par Statistique Canada deux semaines passées—nous avons actuellement 16,9 fatalités ou décès sur 100 mille de population. Le plus près de nous, ce sont les Territoires du Nord-Ouest, à 7,2 accidents mortels sur 100 mille de population.

Nous avons aussi entendu parler mon collègue de Durham, qui nous disait qu'on n'aura pas retiré la partie du photo-radar qui paraît dans le projet de loi. Il aurait fallu procéder à des changements dans 25 autres projets de loi. Il était impossible de procéder actuellement. Nous laissons le pouvoir aux municipalités si elles veulent procéder avec le photo-radar.

Actuellement, en Ontario, nous avons un total de 64 photo-radars qui ont été installés dans cinq municipalités différentes, ce qui était un projet pilote. Aujourd'hui, nous savons que, encore une fois, du fait qu'on a mis en place des photo-radars, nous avons réduit le nombre d'accidents considérablement.

Même d'après les statistiques que nous avons obtenues de 2002, 2,8 % de nos collisions, de nos accidents, sont causées par des personnes qui traversent sur une lumière rouge.

Je dois maintenant passer la parole à mon collègue. I would just like to say that this Bill 73 reaffirms the commitment of the McGuinty government. This government is committed to the safety of our children and also to making sure those people travelling on our highways are safe.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I'm pleased to comment on Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads. It has been mentioned by others that the bill contains a provision for child car seats. It's very important that we protect our

smallest of passengers. We also incorporate in this bill some changes to G2 licences.

In the few minutes I have, I'd like to comment on the school bus provision in this bill. First of all, I want to thank Minister Takhar for incorporating an idea I had in 1996 to bring about some changes to the school bus laws in this province. As a matter of fact, in 1996, the riding I now represent went by a different name. There have been a couple of elections since then.

I want to thank my supporters who have stayed with me on this issue for some eight years now. In the gallery today are two of them, Ginny and Ed Loxton, who have travelled to be at Queen's Park for this third reading debate. They have assisted me over the years and I appreciate their help.

I also want to thank Colleen and Larry Marcuzzi. They travelled to Queen's Park on numerous occasions, and with great courage and through great emotion, shared their lives as no parent should have to in a tragedy in a very public forum. I want to thank Colleen and Larry so very much. We have become very good friends over the years, as have my wife and I with Ginny and Ed Loxton.

The school bus provision that has been spoken about today has wide support. First of all, in committee the opposition put forth no amendments toward it, so obviously they agree, regardless of some of the comments that were made here today.

We had 50,000 people sign petitions in regard to the school bus safety aspect. Police associations supported it. I have boxes and boxes of letters. We've had numerous e-mails that have come in over the last eight years.

What we're talking about is allowing a school bus driver to identify the offending vehicle by licence plate. Currently, until this law is to pass, the bus driver must identify the driver of the offending vehicle, which is almost impossible to do: daylight hours, tinted windows on vehicles, the speed of the vehicle. Most importantly, we must remember that the school bus driver is watching the children, either getting on or getting off the bus, those 810,000 children from JK to grade 12, getting on and off school buses daily. There are some 16,000 buses travelling our roads, and obviously the police cannot follow 16,000 buses.

What we have needed and will now have, should this bill pass, is a conviction mechanism. The previous government increased the fines, and I said, "Go ahead, make them \$10,000 if you want. You have no conviction mechanism." Our minister, Minister Takhar, has listened to the situation and has indeed brought about what is known as vehicle liability. I say to my friends across the way that vehicle liability is used for vehicle impoundment and for those driving while suspended for drunk driving. It's used on red light camera issues. I've mentioned very many times in this House that we use the vehicle licence plate to charge people on the 407. Surely we can use this mechanism to ensure the safety of our young, as we do with car seat legislation in this bill and as we do with the provision on G2 licences.

GOVERNMENT
ADVERTISING ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR
LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Mr Phillips has moved third reading of Bill 25. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Pursuant to the motion passed earlier today, the vote is deferred until Monday, December 6.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE
LAW AMENDMENT ACT
(CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Mr Takhar has moved third reading of Bill 73. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Pursuant to the motion passed earlier, the vote is deferred until Monday, December 6.

It being close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm, December 6.

The House adjourned at 1750.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 6 December 2004

Lundi 6 décembre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 décembre 2004

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

ESTIMATES

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I have a message from the Honourable Lieutenant Governor signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates and supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2005, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ARTHRITIS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): The number of people with arthritis in our province has increased in only seven years by 23%, affecting over 1.6 million citizens who today live with the daily pain and disability of arthritis. In the next 20 years, people with arthritis will increase by 2.8 million, or more than one in five Ontarians. As arthritis claims more victims, the increased demand for hip and knee replacement surgery will mushroom over those years.

The Arthritis Society, whose members are here today in the Legislature to mark Arthritis Day, has confirmed that people with arthritis are not getting the care they need to manage their disease and minimize the pain and disability it causes. They ask the government to provide improved access for arthritis sufferers to early diagnosis, disease information, self-management education, specialist care, rehabilitation, and medication to reduce pain. What is also needed is the development of a province-wide strategy to improve access to programs and services for the prevention and management of arthritis. The society has established a 12-point agenda to improve arthritis care in Ontario.

On Arthritis Day, I would like to salute the members of the Arthritis Society for all their dedicated hard work on behalf of arthritis sufferers and to join with them in calling on the government to take arthritis seriously by moving forward to implement the society's 12-point plan to properly address the prevention and management of this painful disease.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Today is Arthritis Day at the Legislature, and I'd like to acknowledge representatives from the Arthritis Society, including Sheila Renton, Jessie MacIsaac and Helen Cotnam from Sudbury, as well as the 1.6 million Ontarians currently living with the disease.

Arthritis is the second most prevalent chronic condition in Ontario, resulting in more pain and disability than any other chronic disease. In 2001, one in six Ontarians reported having arthritis. By 2026, 2.8 million Ontarians will have the ailment, with the largest increases among adults over 55. More than 50% of people with arthritis reported long-term disability. For those under 55, almost twice the proportion of people with arthritis than any other chronic condition reported long-term disability. Nearly one in three people of working age with arthritis, compared to one in seven people with other chronic conditions, reported being without a job in the previous year, contributing to a significant cost of \$4.4 billion a year.

Despite the huge need, health services have been static since 1997, while the incidence of arthritis is increasing at the rate of 1% per year. The Arthritis Society, with over 50 years in the arthritis rehabilitation and education business, has proposed an ambitious 12-point agenda to improve arthritis care in Ontario. There are three key areas: Reduce wait times and increase capacity for joint replacement surgery; develop and implement an arthritis prevention and management strategy for Ontario; ensure access to early diagnosis and treatment for inflammatory arthritis.

I applaud the efforts of the society in raising awareness and I urge this government to implement the recommendations so this looming health care crisis can be averted.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): Yesterday, December 5, was International Volunteer Day. The invaluable contributions that are made every year by the millions of volunteers across the world and the almost 2.5 million right here in Ontario come in the true spirit of kindness and an unwavering commitment to caring for others.

The selfless and noble acts performed in Ontario contribute over 390 million hours and almost \$6 billion to our economy annually. Our government values these contributions and promotes and recognizes volunteers through several initiatives, such as the Volunteer Service

Awards, the Outstanding Achievement Awards, the Senior Achievement Awards and the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

Today, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to a few of the thousands of volunteers in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore: Tony Panzuto, Dwane McDonald and Jeannie Robinson, of the Etobicoke-Lakeshore Housing Task Force—thank you for your ideas; Elizabeth Sloan, Chelsea Takalo and Tiffany Jiminez at LAMP—thank you for your compassion. Allan Ritchie, Christine Campbell, Tina Blandford, Jim and Jennifer Saunderson, Arden Lambe, Wendy Gamble, and all of the volunteers whom I have not had a chance to recognize here in my minute and a half, thank you for building a better community in Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Thank you for your hard work each and every day.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Not long ago, the Minister of Children and Youth Services announced what was called the Best Start plan for preschool students in Ontario. The problem I've got with that is that it's a laudable goal but, like so many Liberal announcements, it's not backed up with the money.

The other question I have is, do these people over there ever talk? If the minister had been speaking to the Minister of Education, she might have known that in my riding we haven't had half-day busing for 15 years because the funding hasn't been there. We need the announcements to be backed up with the money.

The Minister of Education has promised a new funding formula for school busing. In my riding, we have the oldest fleet and the lowest-paid drivers and operators in the province. We are closing bus routes every year, with more to be scheduled for 2005. I say to the minister, I implore you to get together with your advisers and come up with a funding formula that addresses the needs in rural Ontario.

The minister must know that our students are just as important as the students everywhere else in the province. We are not second-class citizens; we should no longer be treated like them.

BRAMPTON FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise today as a very proud Brampton resident because of an important achievement by a local firefighter named Captain Peter Reid. For those who may not know it, Brampton has one of the best fire departments in the world, and they have the awards to prove it.

The fire department combat team has dominated the most gruelling firefighter competition in the world, the World Firefighter Combat Challenge. In this competition, the Brampton combat team competes in an obstacle course against more than 100 teams and 700 of the best firefighters on the planet.

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The excellence of the Brampton fire department is demonstrated by their performance over the past decade. For example, the Brampton fire department won the championship in 1996, took second place in 1997, first place in 1998 and first place again in 1999. Not only has the Brampton fire department consistently dominated this international competition, but the Brampton firefighter combat team has won the Canadian championships at least five times.

This year, the Brampton combat team won the 2004 over-40 Canadian championship with a world record time. Most recently, captain Peter Reid broke the over-40 world record and finished first in the World Combat Firefighter Challenge. This is just another example of the professional, highly trained and determined people who protect my community from fire every day.

I offer congratulations to the members of the Brampton firefighter combat team, and I commend Brampton firefighters for their commitment to good training and dedication, which Brampton firefighters have demonstrated for more than 150 years.

VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Today the parents, family and friends of 16-year-old Andrew Stewart are mourning his tragic and violent death. On behalf of all members of the Legislature, I extend our condolences.

According to reports, Andrew lost his young life attempting to defend his friend against a gang of thugs just steps from the East York Collegiate school, where Andrew was a student. While crisis counsellors today are attempting to help Andrew's friends to deal with their grief and their fears, the community and this Legislature have a responsibility to address the underlying issues that have led to this tragedy.

The Toronto Sun's Kim Bradley reported, "Parents of some students at East York Collegiate warned the school about the brewing violence weeks before Andrew was slain." The parents want it to be known that they contacted the school to report incidents of bullying at the school, and as one mother said, "They have done nothing."

This is not an isolated case. I bring to the attention of the Minister of Education another serious issue involving a 14-year-old student at Mother Teresa High School in Ottawa. The boy's parents have pleaded with the school to ensure a safe and secure environment for their son, and their appeal is being ignored. I will ask that a page deliver this letter from the parents of this student to the Minister of Education at his desk here in the Legislature, and I ask that the minister personally intervene to ensure this child's safety.

I'm also calling on the Minister of Education to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that every principal, every teacher, every administrator in our school system treats bullying as a serious issue and that every school has a prescribed response protocol for this serious issue.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of Ontarians with acquired brain injuries and the dedicated men and women in the community-based agencies who work so tirelessly on their behalf.

As members from all sides of this House know, the Ontario Association for Community Based Boards of Acquired Brain Injury Services is hosting their annual MPP reception in the Legislature tonight. I would encourage all my colleagues to attend and show their support for the clients, their families and the service providers in this important sector.

One of the agencies that provide valuable residential and outpatient services to people with acquired brain injury is located in my riding of Willowdale. Community Head Injury Resource Services of Toronto, CHIRS, is an organization that does wonderful work in this area. I have had the pleasure of visiting with the clients and staff at CHIRS and was touched by the good work that takes place there. Many of the people who are cared for by CHIRS have few, if any, alternatives.

I am sure that all members will join me in welcoming the acquired brain injury community to the Legislative Assembly today.

ARTHRITIS

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): I'd like to bring your attention to some of the visitors you will find in our gallery representing the Arthritis Society, led by their executive director, Jo-Anne Sobie.

Arthritis is a chronic condition that affects one in seven adults and one in 1,000 children. Individuals affected live with the daily pain and disability of arthritis.

The Arthritis Society is a multidisciplinary and integrated team, including occupational and physiotherapists, social workers, managers and program support staff and 435 program volunteers, that provides invaluable services, treatments and education programs for people with arthritis.

Within my community, Sue MacQueen and Judy McKague are two of the invaluable occupational therapists who assist community members each day. I would like to acknowledge Judy and Sue, whom I had the pleasure to meet with a short time ago, along with their colleague Lynne Tintse and a brave young spokesperson, Tricia Riddell, and her mother. I would also like to acknowledge Tom Millen, the president of the Kitchener-Waterloo Arthritis Association, and Shirley Mitchell, who runs the office each day. The society reaches close to 150,000 Ontarians with arthritis through its Web site, a 1-800 information line, print materials and self-management programs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Arthritis Society for their dedication to this cause and ask all members of the House to join me to

acknowledge their efforts in treating and educating others about this chronic condition.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Today will be the third and final reading of Bill 73, the Highway Traffic Statute Law Amendment Act. I'd like to highlight to all members that this is an extremely important bill dealing with highway safety for Ontario's children. This is a bill that, if passed, will make sure that Ontario's youngest citizens arrive safely at school in the morning and arrive safely home at night.

When parents see their kids off in the morning, they are putting a fundamental trust in the public education system, a trust that their children will be transported safely to and from school. To that end, we are putting a new school bus safety measure forward.

This enhancement in the school bus law would not have been possible without the support of Colleen and Larry Marcuzzi and Ginny and Ed Loxton. For over eight years, they stuck by me. They were never discouraged and they never gave up. I can never thank them enough for their courage and selflessness. They came forward to share their personal tragedies with the public in order to spare other families the nightmare and pain that these two families had to endure. I will forever be grateful for their help, perseverance and friendship.

This government recognizes that we have an important duty in protecting the lives of our children. That is why I'm asking for support of this bill from all members in the House. I encourage you to join me in voting in favour of this bill today.

VISITORS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the members' gallery we have the Car Seat Safety Committee of Haldimand-Norfolk that worked on Bill 73. Please join me in welcoming Karin Marks, Joanne Alessi and Kim Henzy.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Monday, December 6, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has moved government notice of motion number 258. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I am proud to stand in the House today to talk about our government's plan to improve access to front-line care in communities across the province.

Today, I had the opportunity to make an announcement at the Escarpment Primary Care Network, a place that is at the heart of community care in Hamilton. This is a place where physicians work together with nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, mental health workers, dietitians and others and provide comprehensive care to their patients. This is a place that takes prevention as seriously as treating illness. It provides the kind of cradle-to-grave care that more and more patients and their providers are looking for in the province of Ontario.

Government is a steadfast defender of medicare. We believe it's the best expression of our Canadian values, and it does a relatively effective job of making sure Ontarians get the quality care they need. But we all know that it's far from perfect. In many ways, it's still a work in progress.

For one thing, Ontario's health care system really doesn't operate as a real system; it's more of a loose collection of all too often uncoordinated services, and we all know that too many patients slip through the cracks. Too many patients feel as if they are being shunted from one provider to another without any one professional or team looking out for them. Most urgent of all, one million Ontarians are without a family doctor—one who knows their health history, advocates on their behalf and coordinates their care—and 142 communities in our province are underserved, which means they have inadequate access to basic health care services. This is an unacceptable state of affairs, and our government is determined to fix it.

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Our government has been moving forward this year with a plan to build strong community-based health care, because we believe that the very best health care is found close to home. The cornerstone of our plan is creating front-line primary health care teams, a model that we call family health teams. Our government is investing \$600 million over the next four years to create 150 family health teams to bring comprehensive front-line primary care to 2.5 million Ontarians. These will be teams of doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists and other health professionals who deliver a full range of health care services to people after hours, 24/7.

We all know that people don't get sick conveniently between the hours of 9 and 5. Far too many people end up queuing up in emergency rooms because their local clinic closes down in the evening. Others in the same situation risk letting a cough become bronchitis or a sore turn into an infection. They might go to work or school

without getting the proper care or medication and put others at risk of getting sick as well.

Members of a family health team arrange their work schedules so they can provide after-hours care and weekend coverage for each other's patients. And they provide comprehensive care. Prevention and health promotion are as important as treating minor ailments and managing serious, chronic diseases.

Health care is the most basic, most human endeavour, and the very best kind of health care comes from people working together. Family health teams allow patients to benefit from the combined talents of different health care providers.

Diabetes is a textbook example of why primary health care teams work. Diabetes is a complicated condition that requires a combination of treatment and prevention measures, including medications to control blood sugar levels, dietary support and assistance to manage a host of symptoms including eyesight problems, heart disease and foot problems. Here's what the Canadian Diabetes Association said in a recent letter to me: "The Canadian Diabetes Association strongly supports the evidence that diabetes care is most effective when it is organized around a multidisciplinary diabetes health care team." I don't imagine anyone here disagrees with the idea; it just makes sense.

The family health team concept is attractive to many doctors and other health care professionals because it allows them to share their workload, have greater flexibility and balance their work and home lives. If you talk to providers who are part of a team practice, many will tell you that they were sceptical at beginning; they thought it would be difficult to get used to and that they might lose income. Instead, what they discover is that they get paid and supported for spending more time with their patients and delivering the kind of care that they know their patients need. Family health teams will build on successful teams, like the Escarpment Primary Care Network. They will be created from the bottom up and respond to the distinct needs of the patients and the local community they are established to serve. No one family health team will be exactly alike.

More and more family doctors and other professionals are seizing on the opportunity to practise in teams. In fact, we have already received 100 unsolicited expressions of interest from groups across the province interested in setting up family health teams. Some 3,500 family physicians are already choosing to practise in one of the existing primary care models and bring care to 2.8 million Ontario patients.

I had the pleasure of announcing today another milestone in our plan to build family health teams. Communities across Ontario can now apply to establish the first 45 family health teams. These first 45 family health teams are expected to serve up to 650,000 people when they are fully up and running—

Applause.

Hon Mr Smitherman: —and they have one strong supporter in the Liberal back bench—

Applause.

Hon Mr Smitherman: —and more all the time. Evidence of the strong, growing support for family health teams is found here today on the floor of the Ontario Legislature.

Importantly, over the next few months we will be working with communities across the province on their applications, and we will approve and announce the first 45 locations early in 2005. Dr Jim MacLean, lead of primary care on the government's health results team, has just begun travelling from one end of the province to the other to inform communities about how to apply for and set up a family health team. Interested groups will be provided with tools and hands-on support to develop their applications.

We also announced that we have established a family health team action group to help communities design and implement family health teams, headed by Dr Ruth Wilson, the former head of family medicine at Queen's University.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I appointed her.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Yes, the former government appointed Dr Ruth Wilson, and they made a very, very good choice in so doing—something I've had the opportunity to say many, many times.

The action group that Dr Wilson is leading includes representatives from the Ontario College of Family Physicians, the Ontario Medical Association, the Professional Association of Internes and Residents of Ontario, the Ontario Hospital Association, the Nurse Practitioner Association of Ontario, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, and a mental health/social work group to ensure that we get input from a wide range of disciplines.

The McGuinty government is moving forward so that all Ontarians have access to the high-quality care they need, whenever they need it and where they need it. Ontarians have waited on too many governments for far too long. We're getting on with the job of making the changes we were elected to provide, and we're making these changes together with health professionals and with communities all across the breadth of this vast province. Some 12 million Ontarians are counting on us to do so. Thank you very much.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I listened with great interest to the statement by our colleague the Minister of Health with respect to this groundbreaking announcement that he made this morning. I thought it was actually a pretty good announcement, and then I remembered that Elizabeth Witmer, when she was Minister of Health back in the year 2000, made a very similar announcement. But this is a context.

The previous government made this announcement in a rather different context. It was actually part of the 2000 OMA agreement. You know, agreement, where you work with physicians and the government and you come to a collective decision? But this minister cannot seem to come to an agreement with physicians in Ontario, because he wants to bully them.

These family health teams were first negotiated as part of the last agreement, working together with Dr Ruth Wilson in her appointment by Elizabeth Witmer, the former Minister of Health:

"Family health networks will be encouraged," through the budget in the year 2000, "throughout Ontario in accordance with the April 2000 framework agreement between the ... (OMA) and the provincial government. A total of \$250 million was committed in the budget that year to support this effort, with \$100 million of this amount for the provision of incentives for family physicians to change from fee-for-service payments to population-based funding."

This minister wants to once again talk about his agreement, talk about great announcements, instead of getting back to the table and talking once again with Ontario physicians.

I looked in papers right around the province of Ontario this past weekend and read the disgust—even many of the groups that supported the initial agreement that failed are angry at this government and their tactics in dealing with Ontario's physicians.

Look at the Ottawa Sun. "Docs Ready to Battle Liberals," the article says. "Ontario's physicians are beginning to mobilize against the Liberal government's final offer.... 'Doctors have acted in good faith during negotiations and believe we deserve the opportunity to work with the government,'" and many other physicians are coming out.

I look at the section on pediatrics, those physicians in the province of Ontario who look after our children, and what they say about this agreement. They are tremendously angry with this government and the way they're dealing with physicians. Here are the concerns that they have for physician services and the provision of services, particularly to our youngest, most vulnerable citizens. They note the following: "There is no enhancement of counselling fees for children with serious behaviour and developmental disorders such as autism, cerebral palsy, global development delay and learning disabilities."

Once again, this government takes a whack at children with autism. You could say a lot of things about the previous government, but no one on this side of the House ever lied to an autistic child. We never lied to an autistic child. You can say to the member for Nickel Belt—she's never lied to an autistic child, and we're quite proud of that.

1400

But let's look at what the section on pediatrics says. "Waiting times will not be improved" for the youngest citizens of the province of Ontario because of their disagreement. "The Section on Pediatrics is at a loss to understand why the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care would not see fit to give children with chronic disease the same benefits as adults with chronic disease"—tremendously concerned. They go on: "By excluding pediatricians from your proposed health care teams, the front-line care of thousands of children will be in jeopardy."

I see the minister doesn't want to make reference to that today. Instead he takes a reannouncement, a four-year-old reannouncement by the previous government, and he wants the status quo. He is not prepared to stand up and to agree that he has made a terrible mistake and just simply agree to sit down with Ontario physicians and to try to give negotiations a final opportunity. They met 122 times, they continue to say. All we're asking them is to sit down one more time and give it an extra go. But that is unlikely.

Look at what Ontario physicians said about this government just last week. The Ontario Medical Association "are unanimous in their indignation and rejection of the process and tactics" of this government, that they have unilaterally imposed "a new contract on Ontario's 24,000 doctors." Going on, in Dr John Rapin's words, "It was apparent at" the meeting you held with them "that your government had no intention of working with" the OMA.

It's time this minister put away his boxing gloves and sat down to work constructively with Ontario physicians.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In responding to the minister, I want to pick up near the end of the statement where he said, with respect to primary health care, that Ontarians have waited on too many governments for far too long.

I was very proud to be part of a government that established 21 new community health centres in the province of Ontario during our time in office. I was proud to be part of a government that established nine aboriginal healing and wellness centres, which are essentially aboriginal community health centres, because those centres made a tremendous difference in the lives of many people in many communities who were trying to access primary health care. This responded to a very direct and a very clear need for those people to get primary health care.

For the life of me, I don't understand why the government doesn't use a model that has been effective, that has worked, and just expand the number of community health centres in Ontario in order to respond to community needs. That would make sense.

Now, CHCs have been in existence for over 30 years in Ontario. They are run by local community boards, which take into account the particular health needs of the community they represent and establish their programs and services to respond to those health care needs.

I wonder if the family health teams that the government is going to put in place will have community-run, local boards. That is key to the effective running of community health centres. We know that local control means that boards can respond effectively and in a timely fashion to the needs that come from the community. Those needs can be very diverse, can be very different, can be linguistic needs that need to be responded to, can be the needs of very difficult populations that people have to respond to—HIV/AIDS clients, for example. Community boards can do that, and it will be interesting to see if the government will use what has been an

effective strategy from CHCs and implement those with the family health teams, namely the community boards.

We know that CHCs already draw on and effectively use the skills and expertise of many health care providers. Community health centres already have a broad range of health care professionals: physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, dietitians, community health workers—any number of health care providers who bring their skills, bring their expertise, bring their scope of practice to the community health centre and work together in a team to ensure that people get the health care they need from the health care professional who is best suited to provide it. Each of them uses all of their talents in this model, each of them is paid on salary and each of them ensures not only that they are delivering treatment in response to a health care need, but that the team is also involved in initiatives with respect to health care promotion, with respect to illness prevention, with respect to the maintenance of chronic illnesses like diabetes and arthritis. Those are things that community health centres already do, and most of them already ensure that there is a health care provider who is on call 24/7 to respond to the needs of the local community.

What's interesting is that about four years ago, the Ministry of Health did an internal review of community health centres to determine how they were functioning in the province. I can tell you that the results of that review were very positive. This was done by the Ministry of Health itself. On every level, the ministry concluded that community health centres do respond effectively and fully to the primary health care needs of Ontarians. Why on earth, in the face of a review that is now four years old and that clearly shows how important and effective CHCs are as a model for primary health care reform, would the government be looking to now another model to deliver primary health care in the province? It makes no sense.

There are over 80 communities now that have proposals into the Ministry of Health for community health centres. I say to the minister and this government, fund those communities now. We have a model that is effective. We have a model that has been proven. We have a model that the Ministry of Health supports. Why doesn't this government support community health centres and get on with the business of funding them now?

DEFERRED VOTES

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PUBLICITÉ GOUVERNEMENTALE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising / Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1407 to 1412.

The Speaker: Mr Phillips has moved third reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Marsales, Judy	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Barrett, Toby	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hardeman, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	Miller, Norm	Yakubuski, John
Jackson, Cameron	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 17.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SÉCURITÉ DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1415 to 1420.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Arthurs, Wayne	Horwath, Andrea	Peters, Steve
Baird, John R.	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Ramsay, David
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sterling, Norman W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Martel, Shelley	Takhar, Harinder S.
Churley, Marilyn	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Tony C.
Fonseca, Peter	Miller, Norm	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Milloy, John	Yakubuski, John
Gravelle, Michael	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 69; the nays are 0.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes in memory of the Montreal massacre victims. I believe we also have unanimous consent to wear the buttons in respect of that.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent as requested by the government House leader? Agreed.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I rise today in memory of 14 young women who were murdered at l'École polytechnique in Montreal 15 years ago today. These young women, who had so much to live for, so much to offer, were murdered because they were women. None of these innocent women should have died. We mourn each tragic and senseless loss.

Today, I attended events of remembrance—and they are legion across the province—at Mount Sinai this morning, health professionals getting together to talk about their role on the front lines of protecting women against domestic violence; at Women's College Health Sciences Centre, a wonderful service of remembrance for the 14 women who died; and at George Brown College, the students and faculty together discussing their role in our future in changing attitudes in Ontario and the world to protect women against violence.

Today is the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. The United Nations, in its Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, recognizes that violence against women

allows for a power imbalance and is a mechanism to force women into a subordinate position compared with men. Violence against women impoverishes society economically, politically and culturally by limiting the active role that women can make in the development of our communities.

Despite its pervasiveness, violence against women is not natural or inevitable. Preventing violence against women requires us to challenge the cultural attitudes and stereotypes that diminish women's equality and to promote equality in all areas of a woman's life. We must transform systems, institutions, attitudes and behaviours.

This government is committed to action on the issue of violence against women to achieve real, positive change. I'm proud to be associated with a government that sees violence against women as a priority and to step behind our leader, Dalton McGuinty, as he leads that charge.

On Thursday of last week, I was proud to be in attendance at the Canadian Women's Foundation as they launched a strategy to further involve the public sector with the private sector on issues of domestic violence. This strategy involves raising funds from the private sector to assist in the violence against women prevention movement. A safer environment for women and their children won't be created by any single action or by government acting alone. It will be created because of a concerted and coordinated effort across all sectors of society.

Women's organizations have worked hard to raise awareness of violence against women. Networks that have been created at the local, provincial, national and international levels have inspired a wide range of campaigns and have brought the issue of violence against women front and centre. Since 1991, YWCA Canada has distributed rose buttons to mark Canada's national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women each December 6. Over 200,000 buttons have been distributed to schools, shelters, places of work and individuals across Canada.

I have with me here for all of us in the House our own rose buttons. I invite all of us to pick them up and wear them today and on to demonstrate your commitment to ending violence against women. Together, we've got to ensure that a massacre like the one in Montreal never happens again.

As I close, I'd ask all of you to rise with me as we read the 14 names of those women who died and those who were lost to us so tragically: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte.

We'll stand in our places today and do our part to see that this doesn't happen again.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am pleased to join my colleagues from the other two parties in recognizing today, December 6, as the national Day of

Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada.

Established in 1991 by the Parliament of Canada, this day coincides with the anniversary of the deaths of 14 young women who were tragically murdered 15 years ago, on December 6, 1989, at École polytechnique in Montreal. The 14 young women were killed in a senseless act of violence simply because of their gender.

Regrettably, today, 15 years later, violence against women continues. It is not enough for us to just remember all the women who live daily with the threat of violence or who have died as a result of deliberate acts of gender-based violence. We must work for change. We must commit ourselves to eradicating violence against women.

1430

The current statistics are unacceptable. According to the Government of Canada Status of Women Web site, over three quarters, 77%, of reported victims of criminal harassment in 2000 were women. Of the almost 34,000 victims of spousal violence reported in 2000, women accounted for the majority of victims, 85%, a total of 28,633 victims. In 2001, 86 persons were killed by a current or ex-spouse. Four of five victims of spousal homicide were female. There were 69 women, compared to 17 men. In addition to those killed by a spouse, six women were killed by a current or ex-boyfriend. These statistics speak to the need to do more to end the violence. All women in this province, this country and this world deserve the right to live without fear.

We need to continue to educate people, and we need to continue to change attitudes and behaviours that, no matter how casual or seemingly innocent, do contribute to the continuation of violent and abusive behaviour against women. Moreover, violence against women carries heavy consequences for those who are victims and for society in general. For the victims of violence, there are psychological consequences along with the physical. We know that girls and boys who witness or experience violence in the home are at high risk of becoming victims and/or abusers later in life.

As a community and a society, the fear of aggression is present not only in the lives of victims of violence but also in the lives of far too many other women. How many women do you know who will not travel alone, who worry about waiting for or using public transportation alone after dark, or who are afraid to walk home alone in the evening? According to the statistics, there are far too many.

Today, as we remember and observe a moment of silence to the memory of those 14 young women, and all women killed as a result of violence, let us not only reaffirm our commitment in this House and this province to end violence against women, but let us personally reflect on the actions we can take as individuals to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women in the future.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It was 15 years ago today that a 25-year-old man walked into the

University of Montreal's school of engineering building carrying a semi-automatic rifle. He walked into the classroom, shouting, "I want the women." He separated the men from the women, ordered the men to leave, and lined the women up along an execution wall. "You are all feminists," he yelled, and he began shooting. As we all know, by the end of his rampage he had murdered 14 women and injured 13 others, mostly women. This is one of the most tragic mass shootings in Canadian history. These killings shook us to the core and brought to the forefront how common it actually is, in a tragic way, for women in this nation to face threats to their safety and prosperity simply because they are women.

Today being the 15th day of remembrance for the lives lost, I just returned with other colleagues from Women's College Hospital, where once again I partook in a vigil to honour and mourn these 14 women. Today I held a rose representing the life and memory of Anne-Marie Edward. Every year such tributes and the other events leading to it transport me, and I'm sure many of us, back to when we first learned what had transpired. I relive the acute horror, anger and agony we felt that day and the days after. I also remember how in the immediate days, weeks, months following the murders, an urgency set in to root out the causes of violence and discrimination against women. It is natural after such a tragedy to seek some meaningful change.

In the years following, however, violence against women remains a prevalent and growing crisis while efforts to end it have suffered setbacks. There is a troubling rise in sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace. The occurrence of sexual assault has also increased, particularly incidents involving younger women as the victims. Women between the ages of 16 and 21 face the highest risk of experiencing sexual violence.

Since December 6, 1989, we have seen two high-profile coroners' inquests in Ontario involving homicides stemming from domestic assault. On average, one woman in Ontario will be killed in a domestic homicide every week.

This past year, there was a disturbing T-shirt available for purchase, showing a sledgehammer and the phrase, "She deserved it." Supporters of the T-shirt characterized it as "a joke," and one scoffed at criticism by telling media that no one would really smash someone's head with a hammer. While the shirt was removed from storefronts following protests, a woman was murdered in St Catharines a few weeks later by her estranged husband. Her skull was smashed in by blunt force trauma.

Ontario came too close again to a femicide when Wyann Ruso was attacked by her husband with an axe, despite having contacted the police about the threat to her life. I was asked to speak at a press conference with Ms Ruso. When asked why she was coming forward, she said that she hoped that speaking publicly about her ordeal would be a catalyst for change.

Government does have a paramount role to play in seeing to that change, but change is drastically slow. We

have been reminded by a multitude of groups of what needs to be done on this front. As Rhonda Roffey, executive director of Women's Habitat, who was the keynote speaker at Women's College Hospital, said today, there have been reports, studies, maps, diagrams etc on how to do it. We need to act. We don't need more reports.

Recommendations that sexual harassment be deemed a workplace hazard under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, that affordable housing be built so women do not have to make the choice between staying in a violent relationship and poverty, that the clawback be ended and that daycare be made affordable and available: All of those are things that have been recommended time and time again and need to be put in place.

One of the things we heard today is that because shelters—the emergency housing—are so crowded now, women can't get in because women can't get out. The length of their stay remains longer and longer.

So the core message for today is that consciousness about the real and ever-present threats women face cannot be reserved for occasions that fall during November. The sombre words uttered at these times must be accompanied by a resolve by all of us to put an end to the prejudice that undermines equality and underlies acts of violence. Anything less equals being complicit.

The Speaker: Would all members and guests please rise and observe a moment of silence in remembrance of the tragic events at the University of Montreal, in Quebec, on December 6, 1989.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORAL QUESTIONS

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Finance. I'd like to ask you about what has been described as the largest breach of privacy in Ontario's history: the release to complete strangers of 27,000 names, addresses and social insurance numbers.

Minister, this happened through your ministry under your watch. Why did it happen, and what are you doing about it?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I know the Chair of Management Board will want to comment on that.

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Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'd just say that to a very large extent it is under Management Board, so I will accept responsibility for it.

Just so the public is aware, there was a change in a program designed to provide cheques to individuals receiving something called the child care supplement. During the implementation of that change what happened

was that the name, address and SIN number of individuals were given on the stub of the cheque of the individual above. In other words, there was a sequence of these things and one individual got the name of the next person and their SIN number and address as a result of, frankly, a computer error and human error.

The minister found out about it first thing Friday morning, took steps immediately to fix it, to ensure that the 27,000 people were notified of the problem, and immediately notified the Information and Privacy Commissioner as well.

Mr Runciman: We have the Web site, we have the cheques, and they all say "Ministry of Finance." They don't say "Chair of Management Board."

The Minister of Finance might want to consider a spine transplant and answer some questions that deal with his ministry. We're talking about some basic questions. All the minister gave us here was what has already been made public, and there are basic questions he is either not prepared to answer or is avoiding.

Minister, why didn't you test your new computer system before sending out 27,000 cheques? Were you concerned about costs? Who made the decision not to do a test run? Was your office, the Minister of Finance's office, involved or advised? At least 27,000 people now face the real possibility of having their identities stolen, and they deserve answers. Please start delivering real, meaningful and helpful answers.

Hon Mr Phillips: First, I accept full responsibility. It was Management Board that, in the end, ran the program. We've taken, I think, all the steps that were appropriate.

As soon as we found out about it, we made sure the problem was fixed. Twenty-seven thousand letters were in the mail at 7 o'clock this morning, giving people the answers to those very questions that you've outlined. Ministry staff worked the entire weekend to make sure the problem was solved and that the problem was not going beyond this. Twenty-seven thousand letters were prepared and in the mail first thing this morning. At 7 o'clock, in what's called the first sort, those letters were all there.

So when you want to know about what action we took, we took action as quickly as we found out about the problem, we took the appropriate action under the advice of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and we provided real answers to 27,000 people. Frankly, this problem should never have happened. We will make sure it doesn't happen again, but we have taken every appropriate step possible.

Mr Runciman: Somebody is screwing up again. We talked to one of these individuals less than 30 minutes ago. No letters, no phone calls, no contact, no indication of how to destroy this information—the only thing they've received from you or your government is a copy of a press release.

Several years ago, during my term as Solicitor General, I stepped aside for a potential privacy breach. At the time, your leader, Mr McGuinty, citing ministerial accountability, said I'd done the right thing. Given Mr

McGuinty's professed belief in ministerial accountability and the acknowledged fact you've indicated here today that you're responsible for this largest privacy breach in Ontario's history, why have you not stepped down as minister until such time as an investigation into this serious incident is completed?

Hon Mr Phillips: Let's put on the record a few facts. It was the previous government that released private, confidential information to something called the provincial office of savings—bank accounts, SIN numbers. Here is the difference: They blocked the Information and Privacy Commissioner's attempt to get at it. We immediately notified the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We took every step possible.

As for the individual you contacted, you probably were not listening to the answer: At 7 o'clock this morning, in the first mail sort, a letter to that person went in the mail. They will get that letter tomorrow or they will get it on Wednesday, and it will provide them with the answers to how they deal with this problem.

So I think we've done the appropriate things, contrary to what the previous government did on the provincial savings office's leak of some very confidential information. They handled it very differently. I think we have handled it appropriately.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr Runciman: I'm going to go back to the Minister of Finance, since his fingerprints are all over this.

When the Liberals were in opposition, they were great believers in ministerial accountability and called for the heads of ministers for matters far less serious than this. What we're talking about today is the worst privacy breach in the province's history.

Minister, your ministry's mistake could facilitate many people's identities being stolen, and jeopardize their finances, their credit rating and even their home. This was a massive violation. Can you advise this House and the 27,000 people whose identities risk being stolen if you have placed their SINs on a watch list looking out for fraudulent or possible criminal use? Have you done that?

Hon Mr Sorbara: The Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Phillips: To the member, I again say we have taken the appropriate steps. We have consulted the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We have sent a letter to the 27,000 people. They are aware of the problem, and that is that the next person on the list got their name, their SIN and their address. We have asked them to destroy that information. We have taken those appropriate steps. We know the magnitude of the problem. We know that individuals only have one additional name. We think we've taken, as I've said, the appropriate steps.

Mr Runciman: The minister doesn't know the magnitude of this. There's no urgency. No one has even heard from this government. It sounds like you're not prepared as a minister or as a government to take any responsibility for this massive violation of privacy laws. Blame it on some dumb, incompetent bureaucrat. Liberal hands are clean; a human mistake.

We don't accept that, and I'm sure the 27,000 poor souls whose identities now risk being stolen—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I get some order, please. Member from Durham.

Mr Runciman: We don't accept this Liberal attempt at a whitewash, and I'm sure the 27,000 poor souls whose identities now risk being stolen don't accept it either. This is an enormously significant breach of privacy, one that deserves more than a behind-closed-door review by the privacy commissioner.

Will you establish a public legislative inquiry to determine what happened, why it happened and who is responsible, and to review the steps taken to protect those whose privacy was violated? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Phillips: I will answer. I hope you listen to the answer, because your question indicates you weren't listening to it.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Phillips: Please be calm. I said—

Mr Runciman: I wish you'd listen to the questions.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Phillips: I accept responsibility. I said that. On Friday I accepted responsibility. I indicated to the 27,000 people that we apologize. We began action. The letters went in the mail as quickly as they possibly could. The first sort is at 7 o'clock this morning. The letter was there.

We called in the privacy commissioner. We asked for her advice. She is conducting a report. She is an officer of the Legislature. Surely we have some faith in her to conduct a proper inquiry. I am saying to the Legislature that we now have an officer of this Legislature looking at it. Surely we can await her report. Isn't that the sensible thing to do?

Mr Runciman: That is an unbelievable response from a Liberal. Back in 1996, in the wake of Jim Wilson's resignation for a breach of privacy, your leader, Dalton McGuinty, said an FOI commissioner's investigation wouldn't do. It's conducted in secret: no media or public scrutiny; no testimony under oath. That was your leader's position in opposition.

Today we are dealing with the worst breach of privacy in Ontario's history, and you're telling this House and 27,000 people that the Liberals are now singing a different tune. They'll say one thing in opposition and then completely the opposite in government. And you wonder why people are cynical. Why are you wondering? Minister, will you follow the 1996 advice of your leader, Mr McGuinty, and call a legislative inquiry?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again, I say to the public, and you should listen to this, Mr Speaker: When they were in office, "... disclosure of highly confidential information given out." Then, what did they do to the Information and Privacy Commissioner? Here's what she says: "The ministry was disrespectful of the mandate of this office. The ministry's efforts to limit our investigation and its failure, in our view, to use its best efforts to ensure that its current and former employees co-operated with us has

hindered this investigation," and the previous government was found in contempt of the Legislature.

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We're doing it differently. We have asked the Information and Privacy Commissioner to look at this—we notified her immediately. We've taken all the appropriate steps to deal with these 27,000 people. We are doing what I regard, and what I hope the people of Ontario regard, as the appropriate things in this matter.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the finance minister. In February, the McGuinty government promised historic action on North America's fastest-growing crime, identity theft. Do you know what? It's a promise kept. Last week, the McGuinty government delivered the biggest breach of personal privacy and security in Ontario's history. The McGuinty government disclosed the names, addresses and social insurance numbers of 27,000 Ontarians, and you've put those 27,000 people at serious risk of identity theft and fraud.

In February, you promised action of historic proportions. Last week, you failed in historic proportions. Finance Minister, what's next?

Hon Mr Sorbara: The Chair of Management Board.

Hon Mr Phillips: I think it's very important that the public understand what we're dealing with here: Some 27,000 individuals got the name, social insurance number and address of the next person on the list to receive a cheque. That's what happened. We've notified those 27,000 people. Everybody knows whose name is on the next one. We've asked them to destroy that. We've done what the Information and Privacy Commissioner has advised us to do.

I think we have dealt with this appropriately. It was a mistake that should not have been made. It will be fixed. It is fixed. It's limited, as I say, to one individual knowing the name of the next person on that list and their SIN number. We'll ask the people of Ontario to do what I know they will do: destroy that information.

Mr Hampton: This is the leaflet that the McGuinty government released in February, called Keep Your Identity Safe: What You Need to Know to Protect Yourself. We now know that it should have said, What You Need to Know to Protect Yourself from the McGuinty Government.

Apologies and excuses aren't enough, Minister. In the electronic age, identity theft is a very serious threat to those 27,000 people, and the McGuinty government is responsible.

Under the law of Ontario, if a private corporation did this, they would possibly be subject to a \$250,000 fine and compensation of the victims. Will the 27,000 victims of the McGuinty government receive any compensation for the damage you've caused them?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again, the damage is the need for them to get rid of that information. I remind all of us—I shouldn't need to spell this out—that we know exactly who got the name of the next person. Frankly, I think that eliminates any possibility of theft or fraud in this case.

So we have taken the steps the Information and Privacy Commissioner has outlined for us. We know exactly the size of the problem, and we know who got the name of the next person. As I say, I have confidence in the people of Ontario to do the appropriate thing and simply say, "I inadvertently got the name of somebody," and it's gone.

Mr Hampton: Ten short months ago, this government said, "Security is a top priority for our government, and the integrity of each Ontarian's identity is critical..." So said the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. But by your government's own actions, you've demonstrated that security is a low priority and that the integrity of each Ontarian's identity is trivial to you.

Minister, if you agree that this is a serious matter, will you agree to a full public investigation by the privacy commissioner, with the terms of reference of that investigation determined here in the Legislature and the full report tabled here in the Legislature within six months?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again, I say to the public, I take it extremely seriously. I found out about it Friday morning. We took all of the steps to correct the problem. We began the action to make sure that we communicated to the 27,000 people. We have launched an internal audit as well.

I would just say to all of us, once again, we have the Information and Privacy Commissioner, an officer of this Legislature, a highly regarded individual, who I have every confidence in to do the appropriate investigation. Now, in another case, her report led to the government of the day being held in contempt of the Legislature because they didn't co-operate. I assure you and the public that we'll co-operate and are co-operating absolutely fully with the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Health. For months we have warned you that your failure to properly fund Ontario's hospitals is hurting patient care in communities across this province. Now we learn of another most disappointing incident: 10 of the most fragile babies in Ontario became seriously ill last week after catching a virus in the overcrowded neonatal unit at Women's College Hospital in Toronto.

In 2003, the Conservative government committed funding to address the problem of overcrowding and inadequate space in the neonatal unit, but when you became government, you stopped the project and put these infants at risk of what happened last week. Minister, why did you stall this project when you knew that doing so would put frail infants at risk?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question and say to those women and men who are working today, as they have for some time, at the perinatal and gynecology program at the Women's College site of Sunnybrook and Women's, that we appre-

ciate their efforts on behalf of the patients—the youngest and their moms—in the province of Ontario.

I would like to correct the statement that the honourable member made. The previous government certainly did not provide funding; they provided a press release. The challenge that we confront as a government is that all across the breadth of the province of Ontario in the run-up to the last election, the previous government ran around and presented plastic cheques—rubber cheques, actually.

The fact of the matter is that the receiving institution, Sunnybrook, which has an expectation of an extraordinarily large capital plan, does not have the fiscal wherewithal to raise their local share of the project. We are, on an expedited basis, asking one of the highest-quality public health administrators that we have in our province, Dr Jack Kitts, the CEO of the Ottawa Hospital, to review the decision point that was taken to make sure that we're moving forward in a fashion which is in the best interests of the patients of the province of Ontario and also within the fiscal capacity of those institutions—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: After 10 frail babies' health is put at risk, then you appoint someone to do damage control. You've known about this for 14 months: Women's College neonatal unit is overcrowded. The Ministry of Health officials say that there should be 100 square feet for each baby's bed and the accompanying equipment. At Women's College Hospital there are just 30 square feet of space in the neonatal unit per infant.

As I say, you've known about this for 14 months. You could have moved ahead to fix this. When will you approve this project, so that we can provide these frail, vulnerable babies with the health care they need and deserve?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think the honourable member should acknowledge that these babies are being provided an excellent quality of care. There are challenges there, of course, with respect to space. I've had the opportunity to personally tour that facility. I think we should also give appropriate credit to the work that's being done there by the front-line health care workers in the province of Ontario.

There are challenges with respect to infection, which is a reality in all institutional environments, and we seek to try and deal with that.

There is no connection, which the honourable member makes, between that incident and the announcement of Dr Kitts's appointment. This is something that has been in the works for quite some time and in discussion with officials from Women's College Hospital and others.

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It's important that we get on with it; I agree. But unlike the honourable member, I will not be a Minister of Health who advances a policy idea or a political decision that cannot be supported from a financial standpoint by the receiving institution. That's in part a measure of the challenge we're facing, and we are seeking to make sure

we can move forward in a fashion that allows the organization that is to provide the services to do so in a fashion that's consistent with their financial capabilities. We will make that decision on an expedited basis, with a view toward enhancing the quality of care for these young patients.

Mr Hampton: You know, Minister, I remember when you were over here 15 short months ago, and if someone had given that answer, you'd have gone through the roof. This is what you've known for the past 14 months: Women's College Hospital cares for 280 premature babies a year. Each of them weighs less than three pounds. Many are born very premature and are hospitalized for 100 days or more. We have a duty to provide the best possible health care for these fragile babies, and you are failing them.

Women's College neonatal unit is overcrowded. It needs larger quarters so that it is not conducive to the spread of viruses and infections among these frail babies, exactly what happened under your watch. Minister, will you provide the funds now for the new space that is so badly and obviously needed?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think the honourable member unwittingly puts himself in the position where he supports a process that will see a 33-month construction schedule be placed as a barrier to progress on the very same point that he champions today. I support the most timely resolution possible to this issue, but it is not necessarily to be found, sir, in a 33-month construction cycle.

What we are doing on an expedited basis is to find the circumstance that will as quickly and efficiently as possible deliver on the challenge we confront, which has been identified. I agree with the honourable member that it's important to move forward promptly and that's why, as a matter of faith, unlike the honourable member, I don't accept the idea that the only resolution possible is to leave these children there for 33 months while we build an additional wing at a hospital.

I think there are other alternatives that I want to have examined, so I've reached out to one of the most accomplished public health administrators, Dr Jack Kitts, to give us his advice. I think this will happen on an expedited basis, and we'll be able to make a decision that is in the best interests of those young patients.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services dealing with the worst privacy breach in the province's history, and given that we're not getting any helpful responses from the Chair of Management Board. Minister, earlier I asked the Chair of Management Board about the 27,000 people, 27,000 potential victims, whose identities risk being stolen, whether your government has placed their SIN numbers on a watch list, looking out for fraudulent or possible criminal use. We

know that a SIN can be used as a possibility in obtaining a birth certificate, a driver's licence, a range of identity documents, foundation documents. Can you inform the House and those 20,000 concerned people of Ontario just what your government is doing to respond to this concern?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I'd refer it to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Again, just for the public review, as soon as we found out about this—my office found out early Friday morning—the Information and Privacy Commissioner was advised and we sought her input. A letter went out to 27,000 people, with her input, advising them what to do. We are taking all of the appropriate steps based on the best advice we can get, including the advice from the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Some 27,000 people will be getting a letter tomorrow or on Wednesday outlining the steps they're to take to destroy the information, to advise us if there are any particular problems that they see in the days ahead.

Mr Runciman: It's obvious the Liberal government is circling the wagons. They're more intent on protecting their political hides than these potential 27,000 victims. That's the reality.

I'm going to go back to the minister and ask him a question I asked him earlier, which he avoided responding to, and that's with respect to a quote attributed to his now leader back in 1996, when he took a look at the role of the Privacy Commissioner in relation to what could be looked at in terms of a mandate of a legislative committee taking a look at this issue, the worst breach of privacy in the province's history. Minister, I remind you of that. Why are you refusing? Why do you believe it's inappropriate to establish a legislative committee to have a full mandate to take a look at all of the implications of this, not just for what happened in the past, but what may happen in the future? Why will you not do that?

Hon Mr Phillips: Again, what would the public expect from us? Friday morning, as soon as we found out, we notified the Information and Privacy Commissioner, notified every MPP's office. The Information and Privacy Commissioner is the appropriate person to look at this. An officer of the Legislature, she reports to the Legislature. She is looking at it. She's independent; she's someone the public has confidence in. I think that is the appropriate person and body to look at that, and that's what she's doing.

Apart from that, as I say, I think we've taken all the appropriate steps. As soon as we found out about it, we prepared the answer for the 27,000 people; the Information and Privacy Commissioner was notified; all the MPPs here were notified. I instructed our staff to immediately determine whether there was any other problem in any other ministry dealing with this. They began working on that. We spent the weekend fixing the problem. I think the public understands. It was a mistake; it shouldn't have happened. We've taken the steps that I think the public would have expected of their government.

TUITION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, before you and the others were elected, all of you adamantly condemned high tuition fees. You said, and I quote to you from your platform, "The Harris-Eves government raised tuition a staggering 45% for basic undergraduate programs and allowed tuition to skyrocket in programs such as medicine, law and engineering. We will not let this continue." When they elected you, students believed you would not increase tuitions, but your post-secondary review panel has already asserted that students will have to pay more to solve the province's post-secondary funding problem. We didn't think you would be so Machiavellian as to promise a freeze, get elected, and then hike fees immediately after the two-year period is over. Minister, is that what you're planning?

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): Unfortunately, the member from Trinity-Spadina is now speculating, and it's very unfortunate because it is our government that froze tuition fees. It's our government that announced improvements in Ontario student assistance for all students, including opening up eligibility to protected persons and immigrants who have been here for less than 12 months, and improving opportunities for support for students who are not able to get as much support from their parents as previous governments thought they should.

So I'm really surprised that the member from Trinity-Spadina is playing this little game. I have no idea where he's coming from, because the Rae report is not available until January and his recommendations have not yet been tabled.

Mr Marchese: I'm surprised that you are surprised, because I attended a conference a mere couple of months ago where you yourself said that tuition fees were likely to go up, but that a review of the loan system was necessary.

It's no secret to anyone that you and your panel are considering income-contingent repayment schemes. These loan schemes have failed everywhere that they have been tried. Where they have been implemented, they put an unfair burden on lower- and middle-income families, on women and people of colour, and you know that. In Ontario, the Canadian Federation of Students and the faculty association have condemned it, and the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance rejected it. Just today, the Ontario Coalition for Post-Secondary Education says that under this loan scheme, we will see lower-income students pay more for their education than students from high-income families. I can't believe that you are thinking of charging working families more for the same education.

Faced with these findings, and the findings that have failed—the experience of loan schemes in other countries—will you say no to these regressive and irresponsible income-contingent loan repayment schemes?

1510

Hon Mrs Chambers: I do appreciate the newfound interest that the member of the third party is pretending to demonstrate here. Do you know what? The situation that we inherited is what we are working to correct. It is our government that is committed to accessibility, affordability and high-quality education. It is our government that plans to reverse the situation created by the last two governments, Tory and NDP. It was those governments that created a situation where Ontario's universities and colleges are funded at the lowest level of all colleges and universities in Canada. It was those two governments that created a situation where tuition fees rose by more than 130% over the past decade. And it was those two governments that created a decline in student assistance. We will fix that.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Just a short time ago today, we voted in favour of third reading of Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising. For a few years, I sat on the other side of this House and watched the previous government waste hard-earned taxpayers' dollars on partisan government advertising such as the Magna budget, which was perhaps the previous government's biggest advertising ploy but, thank God, a failed one.

I can remember being on campaign trails and people talking about these glossy booklets that showed up in their houses, and all through the year, not just during campaigns. They talked about how much of a waste it was of taxpayers' dollars for them to look at all these government faces taking credit for things they shouldn't have, in a partisan way.

I need to know, for us in my riding, how will Bill 25 be different than yesterday's practices? How can the government have that commitment not to use taxpayers' money on partisan advertising? Can you tell us what changes are happening with Bill 25?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm quite proud of the piece of legislation passed today. There's nothing like it in North America, and perhaps the world. It bans partisan advertising.

The public should be aware of the most important thing: The Auditor General must approve all advertising. The Auditor General is an officer of this Legislature. We've laid out in the bill, as you know, the criteria: It can't be partisan; it must include the cost paid for by the taxpayers; it can't have a picture of the cabinet or the Premier in it; and it lays out the criteria for approving it. I think the public should be comforted that an independent officer of the Legislature, the Auditor General, must approve it. As my colleague said, it will save tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money that can be better spent on health care, education and the environment.

Mr Levac: Speaker, he stole a little bit of my thunder, because that's exactly what we're talking about: making sure that the money gets spent in the right direction. I'm

proud to be part of a government that said they were not going to be wasting valuable taxpayers' dollars on partisan government advertising. It will ensure that taxpayers are being served with the right information at the right time about the programs that the Legislature and the government are doing for the citizens of Ontario. We want to focus those monies on hospitals, on schools, as we've been saying since the very beginning.

But I want to know one thing that's important for the people to understand so that we know that we can get working on this, and that's when the legislation is to be effective and start working. How soon can we expect not to see any more partisan advertising in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr Phillips: Since the bill was introduced, we have been living up to the spirit and intent of it. The Auditor General has asked that we not proclaim certain sections of the bill for a few months while he ensures that he has in place the necessary staff to approve it. As my colleague said, it makes sense. That was the request of the Auditor General, that we not proclaim certain sections.

We're already living up to the spirit of the act. The Auditor General should, in the next few months, have the necessary staff in place so all of the advertising can be referred to his office for his approval before it ever runs here in Ontario.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. You know that you and your Premier both promised during the election to cease the operation of the five coal plants before the end of 2007. You know you made these ridiculous promises while failing to listen to the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force, which unanimously recommended that you postpone this reckless promise.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): Oh, so you're opposed to closing them.

Mr O'Toole: No. Just last week, it's clear you broke your promise. Now you've decided that you'll keep some of the coal plants operating, idling just in case. The real question now is, what plants and at what price? That's clearly the question.

You were quoted in the Windsor Star, your hometown paper, as saying you might need to keep coal reserves running, and God forbid a catastrophe at Beck or at Niagara Falls.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr O'Toole: Furthermore, I would say that this is a really classic moment in Ontario where the Liberals are flip-flopping in public. They've failed, and these are clearly irresponsible and reckless election promises. Stand and tell the people of Ontario what your plans are.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We remain committed to replacing coal-fired generation in Ontario as per our commitment in the last election. We think it is in the best interests of all the people of this province that we reduce

nitrous oxide emissions, sulphur dioxide emissions, mercury and, most important, greenhouse gas emissions.

There are those who say you can't do it. There are those, like Howard Hampton and the NDP, who will say, "Keep Lakeview generating station open. Keep polluting Toronto. Keep polluting Ontario." There are those, like the member who posed the question, who are satisfied that smog days in Algonquin Park are acceptable to the people of Ontario.

We don't think that's acceptable. We made a commitment to reduce and replace coal-fired generation in this province. We are moving as quickly and with as much dispatch and prudence as we can to ensure that we achieve the goal in the timeline we outlined. I invite the member opposite: Let's work together to eliminate smog days in Algonquin Park.

Mr O'Toole: I think the people of Ontario should get ready to find a lump of coal in their Christmas stocking. In fact, if you look at it, you know you're running out of time. That's the issue here. It was an unrealistic, unfulfillable commitment by the Liberals during an election. You know that. The task force knows that. The only people you haven't been straightforward with are the people of Ontario.

You know that the timeline for a new gas plant or a nuclear plant is going to preclude the fact that you're going to need coal-fired generation. You also know that coal traditionally has been used as a peaking power source. During this winter, the people of Ontario are going to have shortage of supply and higher prices.

You are the author of this misfortune. All I'm asking you to do today is to tell the people of Ontario—the jobs, the economy, the threat that's hanging over their heads—that you have no plan except to tell them what they want to hear because of some poll you've done.

Hon Mr Duncan: Here's what the member said in committee on September 15, and just so you'll understand the context of the question—this is from Hansard—he said, "You've got a balance here of stable, reliable supply and its relationship with quality of life." Then he rhetorically asked, "Which comes first?" Do you know what his answer was? Stable prices.

We think quality of life comes first. We think it's important to clean up the environment. We think that there's a long-term cost associated with near-epidemic proportions of childhood asthma. We think it's wrong that a government turns its back on 1,800 premature deaths a year. We think, and disagree with you. We don't agree. We will not put dollars and cents ahead of quality of life. We will put quality of life ahead of everything else. We'll do it fiscally responsibly and ensure a better quality of life, and a better price for electricity, than you could ever have imagined in your eight lost years in office.

1520

GREENBELT

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): A question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Members from

the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance and municipal leaders for the greenbelt have pointed out that 70,000 hectares of forest, wetlands and prime agricultural land need greenbelt protection. These include woodlands, ravines and other areas designated as environmentally significant. There is absolutely no planning case why these significant environmental and agricultural lands are excluded from the greenbelt. These lands will be lost forever if they're not included now. I'm asking you, will you do that today?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'm very pleased to answer this question and anything relating to the greenbelt. The greenbelt is good for you and me and for Ontario's future for generations to come. We are very proud of the fact that we're going to add one million acres of environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands to the greenbelt.

We made a commitment to the people of Ontario when we ran in the election a year and a bit ago, in which we said, "We are going to protect a greenbelt around the city of Toronto," and that's exactly what we're doing. We've had consultations through the Greenbelt Task Force—we've had consultations in eight different settings just over the last couple of months—and we think we're doing the right thing.

It may very well be that at some point in time in the future, more land will be added to the greenbelt, once the Places to Grow study has been completed. But right now, we think the one million acres of land we are adding to the existing Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment is good for the environment, good for future generations and good for Ontario.

Ms Churley: I don't think you understand what they're trying to tell you and what I'm trying to tell you: If you don't include these lands now, they will be gobbled up, developed and lost forever, and your stated goal of stopping urban sprawl under your Greenbelt Act will not be accomplished; it's that simple. By not including those 70,000 hectares of significant environmental and agricultural land in the greenbelt, urban sprawl will continue to encroach upon these natural heritage features and prime farming land.

Minister, I am telling you again, you can stand up and brag about this all you want, but you will not achieve your goal. We are running out of time. Will you do the right thing and move today to designate the land lying between the existing urban boundaries and the proposed greenbelt areas as protected countryside in your final greenbelt plan?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: First of all, let me say that I know that I speak on behalf of the government when we say we appreciate the assistance that member and that party have given, because I know they're all in favour of the greenbelt as well. But let me also say that there is a significant amount of urban land that is outside the greenbelt right now—below the greenbelt—that is still ready for development. We want to take a serious look at the other 150,000 acres of land that lie between the urban

area and the greenbelt. We want to take a look at it in light of the greenbelt we are proposing and in light of the Places to Grow document that's still to come. At some point in time in the future, we will be looking at the 70,000 acres of land she's talking about to see whether that should or should not be included within the greenbelt.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Many families in my community were pleased to hear that our government is increasing funding for programs like Healthy Babies, Healthy Children and infant hearing screening. When you announced Best Start, you made a compelling case for the importance of investing in the healthy development of our children right from the beginning. Will you inform the House about these increased investments and what they will mean for the children and families of Ontario?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I was very pleased to be in Ottawa on Friday to announce the allocations. We are providing an increase of \$2.6 million for this fiscal year for Healthy Babies, Healthy Children, and this will grow to \$8.3 million in 2005-06. This is part of our Best Start plan and is based on the fact that early identification and support is the best way to help keep our children healthy and ensure they have the language skills they need to succeed in school.

This is what Dr Robert Cushman—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. May I ask the member from Burlington to just come to order, please. Could you complete your response, Minister.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: This is what Dr Robert Cushman from Ottawa public health has to say: "The money will allow us to allocate more resources to the families most at risk. We're finding that we visit two thirds of the families, but a certain number of families need long-term follow-up, and this money will allow us to follow those families and to make the resources we have available to them."

Mr Wong: Thank you, Minister. This is exciting news. I know that parents in my community are eager to take advantage of these services. However, I am concerned that not all families in my region will be able to access them. As you know, York region has one of the fastest-growing populations in the province. Over the past number of years, services in York region have not grown to match the growing number of families that need them. Minister, what are you doing to ensure that all children in my community will have access to important programs like Healthy Babies, Healthy Children?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: The honourable member is quite right. There are growing populations in places like York and Peel, and we took that into consideration for

the allocation of these monies. That is why regions like York will be receiving a larger piece of the pie than in previous years. This community will receive an increase of \$1,020,616, and Peel will receive an increase of \$836,954, because these are growing communities and we want all children across the province to be part of our Best Start plan.

The greatest predictor for success in school is speech and language. The earlier we can screen for those difficulties and remediate them, the better the kids will do in school.

HIGHWAY 17

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, in the last election campaign, your party promised "to comprehensively improve northern highways and four-lane vital links to major communities in the northeast and northwest."

In just one week in October, Highway 17 east of Nipigon washed out four times. As part of the Trans-Canada Highway, Highway 17 is certainly a vital transportation link. However, your announcement of the strategic highway infrastructure program and your reannouncement of the northern prosperity plan last week made no mention of improvements to Highway 17 east of Nipigon. Minister, will you commit to make the improvements that are needed to this section of Highway 17 east of Nipigon?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I would like to thank the member from Muskoka for the question. Clearly, there is no question about our commitment to northern highways, and that's why we are ensuring that there is a northern highway strategy, as we committed to in the election. We will live up to our commitment about putting together a northern highway strategy, because we understand that northern highways are economic lifelines to northern Ontario.

We committed unprecedented millions of dollars in the last budget to ensure that we address the concern that the member outlined and the concerns of northerners when it comes to our highways. Certainly, for too long they were ignored by previous governments and we want to ensure that we address those through a northern highway strategy.

Mr Miller: Minister, when you were in opposition, you were demanding work on Highway 69 just about every day. I happened to drive up to Sudbury last week and I didn't see any construction. I don't know what's going on there.

Highway 17 is also a vital link from Nipigon to Thunder Bay. When I visited the area last year, I met with local business people and representatives of the Thunder Bay Regional Cancer Centre. Both told me that four-laning Highway 17 was their number one priority. That's the section where Highway 17 and Highway 11 become one highway, and it's frequently closed in the wintertime.

Minister, this is about safety, the economy, and people's access to timely health care. Will you take action to four-lane Highway 17 from Nipigon to Thunder Bay and then on to Shabaqua Corners?

Hon Mr Bartolucci: For the precise reason outlined in the member's question, we are putting together a northern Ontario highway strategy. He talks about the inaction on Highway 69. The only government to do nothing on Highway 69 south of Sudbury was the previous government.

After one month in office, we signed the strategic highway infrastructure agreement with the federal government. That's going to influence the amount of time it takes to improve those highways: Highway 11, Highway 17, Highway 69. We are committed to ensuring that the economic lifelines, our highways, are addressed not only in a timely way but in a way that is caring and will promote the economic growth and public safety that this government wants when it comes to northern highways.

1530

MIDWIFERY

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario midwives provide vital primary care to moms and their babies during pregnancy and the first six weeks after birth. This model of care provides the kind of results in maternity care that Ontario is looking for: reduced hospital stays, fewer interventions and far fewer hospital readmissions, with excellent health outcomes for women and babies.

In a Ministry of Health survey done last year, women and families receiving midwifery care had a client satisfaction rate of 98.7%, and yet Ontario's 300 registered midwives have not had a wage increase since their profession was regulated by our government in 1994. Minister, midwifery represents a cost-effective way to provide maternity care. When will your government properly compensate Ontario's midwives?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm very pleased to respond to the question from the honourable member and agree very much that midwifery is a very important model of practice. That's why this year our government funded an additional 55 spots, 45 of which have been filled.

I agree with the honourable member that there is an issue about appropriate compensation, and that's why I went very directly to the conference of midwives last year at Kempenfelt Bay and told them very expressly that my first priority was to find funding for the additional 55 spots, which I accomplished, and acknowledged that I would continue to work to try to begin to address the compensation challenges.

I'd be clear in saying to the honourable member, as I have to midwives themselves, that their expectation of having an immediate catch-up for the period of time that the previous government and the latter year of your party's government didn't increase their funding was not reasonable. Having said that, I continue to be of the

opinion that we need to do more to hire more midwives in Ontario and to look at compensation issues, and that's exactly what we're in the midst of doing.

Ms Martel: Minister, you would know, because midwives are telling you, that the number of new registrants just equals the number of midwives who are leaving the profession. There has been no net gain of midwives in the province. That is because, in order to be (a) attracted and (b) retained in the province, these women need to get adequate compensation for the excellent care they're providing to women and children. The lack of any compensation increase in the last 10 years means that many midwives are now unable to provide the kind of high-quality maternity care that Ontario women are entitled to.

Ontario midwives submitted a proposal to your ministry in February 2004 regarding compensation. At their conference in May, you publicly stated you would review their compensation. Since then, numerous meetings between the ministry and midwives to discuss this issue have been cancelled by your ministry. It's now December. No decision has been made with respect to compensation for midwives. Minister, when is your government going to sit down and negotiate fair compensation for Ontario midwives?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I wish I had three minutes to answer all the misinformation in the honourable member's question. Let me say, firstly, that I went very directly to their conference and said that, while I recognized that compensation was their number one issue, it was not mine, and that mine was finding additional resources to hire additional midwives.

The honourable member suggests that we're just netting out the same number of midwives. That's obviously untrue. In 1995-96, the province of Ontario spent \$6 million on midwives. In 2004-05, we're spending \$37 million on midwives. We have gains of midwives and additional services being provided that way.

Having said all that, ministry officials are in very regular contact with midwives, as are political staff in my ministry. And while I regret—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: See, Mr Speaker, the misinformation that one must—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I see that both are not interested in either hearing the question or in the minister's trying to answer the question. Could you wrap it up in about 10 seconds?

Hon Mr Smitherman: All I would say is that I do regret that a planned meeting with me the week before last was cancelled because I had a little stomach ailment, but we're going to have that meeting. We're going to work with midwives.

Interjection.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): You were trying frozen sushi.

Hon Mr Smitherman: It might have been that.

I want to repeat one thing. We are, as relates to health care, in an era of restraint, and the expectation to see all

of this lost time made up in one fell swoop is not practical, given our current fiscal realities.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. My constituents in Algoma-Manitoulin have been anticipating the details of the government's northern prosperity plan. They've been looking forward particularly to the details about the new program areas for the refocused northern Ontario heritage fund.

Since its inception in 1988, the northern Ontario heritage fund has been an important resource for our communities. Can you please tell my constituents about the new program areas for the northern Ontario heritage fund and how they will benefit my constituents in Algoma-Manitoulin?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Before I start, I just want to begin by thanking my cabinet colleagues, who have all been to the north. In fact, several of them have been to the north several times: our Premier, seven times; Minister Bountrogianni, five times; Minister Papatello, four times. Our ministers are visiting the north multiple times, and they understand it.

That's why I am pleased to say that our government is keeping our commitment to refocus the mandate of the northern Ontario heritage fund, which is a key component of our northern prosperity plan. A refocused northern Ontario heritage fund will help northern communities attract and retain investments and jobs that they need to grow.

This new mandate will focus on job creation, private sector involvement and investment, and continued investment in vital infrastructure across the north. There are going to be six new programs, which I'd like to outline in the supplementary.

Mr Brown: As the House will know, the north did not participate in the buoyant economy of southern Ontario during the late 1990s and the early part of this century. We have a lot to make up for.

In my particular constituency, the government announced some months ago and is actively pursuing a \$3.5-million investment from the northern Ontario heritage fund to expand cellular service in the Highway 101 corridor between Chapleau and Wawa, and on Highway 17 between Sault Ste Marie and White River. Obviously, that is a very important initiative for my constituents.

Access to cellular service and broadband Internet services are essential for northerners and northern business. Can you tell my constituents when you'll have more details about the emerging technologies and telecommunications programs and when proponents may apply?

Hon Mr Bartolucci: These six new programs are vitally important to the north. They're called the enterprise north job creation program, the northern Ontario young entrepreneur program, the northern Ontario youth internships and co-op program, and we will continue the infrastructure and community development program. We

will provide assistance supporting emerging technology projects in northern Ontario and we will introduce a new small business energy conservation program.

The member is correct. It is vitally important for his community and the businesses in his community to be able to access the information necessary to apply. So we will provide an unbelievable marketing program in order to ensure that everyone has the information and can start applying in the new year.

PETITIONS

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I am pleased to present petitions from firefighters and their supporters in the Grimsby area, which read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their own free time; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, which is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should support double-hatters, and protect the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

Behind S. Lawson and C. Kirkland, I affix my signature in support.

1540

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my name to this petition and hand it over to Adam.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly; in fact, it responds to Bill 154, my private member's bill. It says,

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my constituents of the riding of Durham.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and....

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

I have already signed this one.

PIT BULLS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition that's titled "Ban the deed, not the breed."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Whereas breed ban legislation is not an effective solution to dog attacks; and

"Whereas the problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from passing breed-specific legislation, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

This is signed by Danielle Kershaw, Bobbi Ann Dwornikiewicz, Rob Willett, Chris Kershaw and others.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with the petition and I've signed it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and...

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital

board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

This petition is signed by a number of residents from Wardsville, Rodney and Muirkirk.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is a "Save Our Regional Centres for People with Developmental Disabilities" petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario's three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

"Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario's regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into centres of excellence to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I'm pleased to sign that.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001, and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003, and in August the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York Region District Health Council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

PIT BULLS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed-specific, and instead implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds."

As I am in favour of this, I will affix my signature.

1550

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government were elected on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario's three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

"Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple

diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario's regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into centres of excellence to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they might live."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO) expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of our society are able to receive the eye care that they need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is written to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students"—my bill—"which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I want to thank NASK, the Canadian association for anaphylaxis and Cindy Paskey for this particular petition. I hand this over to Emma.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I will definitely be supporting Mr Levac's bill if it goes forward.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will ... affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that and pass it to Laura.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT (FALL), 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (AUTOMNE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 149, An Act to implement 2004 Budget measures, enact the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004 and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 149, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2004, édictant la Loi de 2004 sur la Société d'émission d'obligations de développement du Nord de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): I'm told that it is time for questions and comments on Mr Fonseca's speech last week. The member for Simcoe North.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to make a few comments on Mr Fonseca's comments from last week. I want to zero in a little bit on Bill 149 and talk about something that I thought was one of the most mean-spirited things I've seen happen in this House since I've been here, and that was the movement to take Muskoka out of the north. I know my colleague Norm Miller will be talking about this in much more detail in a few moments.

I think the attempt was made specifically because a former finance minister, Ernie Eves, identified a serious problem in the north, in Muskoka, and thought it was a good effort, a smart move, to make Muskoka part of the north. Really and truly, if you're heading north, that's part of the Canadian Shield, and many, many small communities have a very difficult time in Muskoka. I can think of communities like Honey Harbour and MacTier, that I know of, and some of the smaller communities up around Gravenhurst and Bala, which have, no doubt, good seasonal businesses in the summer months. But in the winter months it's a different story. They need any assistance they can get. It would be no different having a community like MacTier than some of the communities we would see in Sudbury, the Nickel Belt area, Sault Ste Marie or the Thunder Bay area.

So I think that was a very mean-spirited move by the finance minister. I wish he would use some common sense and put Muskoka in northern Ontario, as it has been in the past few years. It has been a benefit to the community and I think it's safe to say that those few benefits have given Muskoka a chance to move in a forward direction. I know my colleague Norm Miller will be speaking a lot more on this particular piece of legislation very shortly, but I want to identify that as a serious concern on my part.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's certainly my pleasure to say a few words at this time about Bill 149, which I believe is the third budget bill being brought forward.

I'm interested in the comments that were made just now because, really, the thing that I found most heartless about this particular bill is the fact that it got rid of the PST rebate for modification of vehicles for people with disabilities—handicapped drivers. People here know that there is constant concern about that raised by my colleague Michael Prue from Beaches-East York, particularly in regard to advocating for a constituent in his riding.

What happened was, the opportunity to apply for that rebate was, of course, taken away, but the government forgot to inform people and forgot to take that information off the Web site. So it was quite a debacle and there was quite a disappointment. In fact, my understanding, having talked to Mr Prue as recently as just a few minutes ago, is that although there have been undertakings by the minister that that's going to be addressed and the gentleman is going to have the rebate applied, he has not yet received it. So I certainly hope that, at least in that one instance, the heartlessness of that removal of the rebate is going to be reduced because that one person will get their rebate.

However, this bill in particular deals with a number of tax changes and a number of other kinds of changes. In fact, I think some 40 different statutes are affected by this bill. One, for example, is the elimination of capital tax. It's going to cost the Ontario treasury about \$1 billion when it's completely eliminated by 2012, which really is kind of backwards. Interestingly enough, the Liberals, when in opposition, opposed the Conservative move to do this very thing, and now they're doing it, which again shows how flip-floppy this government is.

1600

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I also am pleased to rise. I'll be supporting Bill 149, but I want to take this opportunity to speak about something non-partisan that is contained in the bill. Mr Speaker, you will recall that last spring that I introduced a private member's bill called Bill 40 that was passed, which was designed to protect firefighters and paramedics and police officers from having their personal insurance rates go up if they had an accident while on duty. All three parties agreed that that was an odious practice that had to stop.

During that period, being a rookie at trying to get a piece of legislation through, we were at clause-by-clause and our good friends at the Ontario Paramedic Association pointed out what they considered to be a flaw in the bill, that we were discussing the issue of ambulances but not emergency response vehicles. Unfortunately, I was of the mistaken impression that "emergency response vehicles" would cover all of these eventualities. After the bill had gone through committee, just before it received third reading approval, I discovered that error.

I reached out to two other members who had helped sponsor the bill with me, who helped me with the bill, the member for Leeds-Grenville and the member from Niagara Centre. Working in conjunction with the Minister of Finance, it was agreed that when budget papers were presented to this House subsequently, a small

amendment would be contained so that that clarification would be provided to protect all of the paramedics in the province of Ontario.

So I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance for making sure that Bill 149 contains that amendment. I think it's very important that paramedics are treated the same as firefighters and police officers. I want to thank the member for Leeds-Grenville and the member for Niagara Centre, from the two opposition parties, for agreeing last spring to make that happen. Again, I look forward to supporting Bill 149 and to further debate.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to comment on my colleague from Mississauga East's remarks. One thing that I'd hoped the member would have said more about, and maybe he will in his summary, is this what I view as vindictive move by the government to take Muskoka out of the definition of northern Ontario. I know this member to be a very fair member, and I hope he's fair-minded and may support it if my colleague brings forward an amendment to allow Muskoka to stay in northern Ontario.

Certainly, Andy Mitchell, the local member who is the Minister of Agriculture, if I'm right, has fought hard at the federal level to maintain that definition, so hopefully it has some allies on the government benches who would support the opposition's call to maintain that definition of northern Ontario the same as the federal one.

I know people sometimes unfairly characterize Muskoka as being a tremendously wealthy region, and therefore it shouldn't benefit from these northern programs. But as I'm sure my colleague will indicate, it's quite the contrary: highly seasonal in its tourism attractions, which means the population that's year-round will have a higher unemployment rate than the rest of Ontario, and likely a lower income level across that area. All the health and social policy issues that often go with those economic indicators make it very close in those areas to northern Ontario, and therefore it should maintain that definition.

This is very important, because in the past things like the local hospitals have benefited from additional funding through the northern Ontario heritage fund. I was there as a minister. We had programs for technical improvements, for example, and basic care and maintenance. The northern Ontario health travel grant, which helps individuals who can't get service closer to home to come into a city like Toronto for service for their child—they would no longer be eligible for that if this bill passes. Certainly, initiatives that help tourism, like the Gravenhurst wharf project and help for the snowmobile trails, will no longer exist if this bill is passed without amendments.

So I support my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who has fought like a tiger to maintain that definition of northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Mississauga East has two minutes to reply.

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 149. I want to acknowledge all those who

have spoken to Bill 149: the member from Simcoe North, the member from Hamilton East, the member for Perth-Middlesex and the member from Erie-Lincoln.

Bill 149 is a bill that will enrich the lives of all Ontarians for today and tomorrow, a very balanced bill. It's going to provide a number of measures to improve the lives of Ontarians: the apprenticeship training tax credit; the gradual elimination of capital tax; the replacing of a number of tax credits that are not performing as they should—when change is needed, this government makes sure that it makes those changes; the northern Ontario grow bonds; and the Ontario commercialization investment funds program.

On that note, the Ontario commercialization investment funds program is really going to harness all the great work that's being done in colleges and universities and the research that's being performed in these institutions. What we want to do is make sure all of those spinoffs can be commercialized and leveraged to help our economy; also, within the apprenticeship training tax credit, make sure we do have a knowledge-based economy, and that all Ontarians are well-trained and well-skilled to, once again, ensure that we have a strong economy today and well into our future.

This government has achieved a great deal this fiscal year. Through responsible management, our economy is stronger and our finances are healthier than ever. We have an improved health care system and a stronger economy. We're working toward a more efficient government so that we can have those precious dollars to spend on great services for Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon on Bill 149, An Act to implement 2004 Budget measures, enact the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004 and amend various Acts.

Before I start, I would like to point out that today, visiting in the Legislature, is page Danika Hawthorne's mother, Sherri Hawthorne, who is in the west members' gallery, so we can all give her a warm welcome here this afternoon. I had the pleasure of going out to lunch with Danika in her first week here as a page. She's a delightful young woman and is representing South River and area very well here at the Legislature.

This afternoon we're talking about Bill 149. Unfortunately, Bill 149 is bad news for the people of Muskoka. I'd like to talk a bit about the process to remove Muskoka from the north.

First of all, the process started on May 18 in the provincial budget. Hidden at the bottom of page 96, I believe it was, there was a reference to returning to traditional boundaries for northern Ontario. There was no mention of the word "Muskoka" whatsoever in that budget. It was only late in the evening, after the budget, that I noticed that particular line. There was no consultation with the people of Muskoka, who are greatly affected by this legislation.

We have in schedule 27 of the budget bill the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act. The amendment to the North-

ern Ontario Heritage Fund Act removes a reference to the district municipality of Muskoka. Schedule 28, the Northern Services Boards Act: The amendment to the Northern Services Boards Act removes the reference to the district municipality of Muskoka.

I think the government is confusing those who cottage in Muskoka with those who live and work in Muskoka. When you really look at income levels in Muskoka, it's a very strong point why Muskoka should not be taken out of the north. When you compare that to the rest of northern Ontario, the median family income, based on Stats Canada 2001 statistics for most areas of northern Ontario, Muskoka is lower than the great majority of them. For example, Ontario's median family income is \$61,024. Muskoka is more than \$10,000 below that, \$50,713, as compared to North Bay, which is certainly in the north, \$53,978, Thunder Bay, \$59,580, Kenora, \$62,990, or the Minister of Northern Development and Mines' own riding, Sudbury, \$56,118. That's where the government is confusing the wealthy cottage owners who come up and spend a short time, usually in the summer, in Muskoka with those who are there year-round, struggling to eke out a living. By removing Muskoka from the north, it's going to hurt the year-round residents of Muskoka. It's going to hurt in many different ways.

1610

Health care: The two hospitals in Muskoka, the Huntsville hospital and the Bracebridge hospital, have benefited significantly from northern Ontario heritage fund investments. In Bracebridge, the PACS system, the digitalization of images, was made possible through an investment of the northern Ontario heritage fund. In Huntsville, they've had many programs, usually about \$250,000 a year, that have benefited from investments by the northern Ontario heritage fund. For the individual citizens of Muskoka, being able to partake in the northern health travel grant to assist in transportation costs—just yesterday, I received an e-mail from Bala from some seniors on a fixed income who were very concerned that, for them, it may mean not being able to access medical care because they just don't have the funds to make the long trip for necessary medical help. So it is going to hurt the people of Muskoka.

The history of this: They introduced it in May. Then, after a question in the Legislature that I asked of the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Finance agreed to meet in late June or early July with the mayors of Muskoka. They went down and met with Mr Sorbara. What did he say? Well, he said that he wasn't going to change his mind about removing Muskoka from the north, but he was going to assist with transition.

I'm a little disappointed in what has happened since then, because there are some huge projects going on in Muskoka right now that the government had made commitments to. I don't care whether it was the past Conservative government or the current Liberal government. In the eyes of the town of Gravenhurst, it's still the government.

For example, the Muskoka wharf project is an absolutely huge project for the town of Gravenhurst—over

\$60 million—and the biggest thing happening in that town. In December 2001, the government of Ontario approved the investment of \$5 million by the northern Ontario heritage fund in that project. From that time forward, the town of Gravenhurst and its partners—the historical foundation, the private sector partners—have been working as quickly as possible to start the project. All kinds of construction is going on. For the town of Gravenhurst, this is a huge project.

They did what was right. They got a lot of public input into the project, and it did change as a result of that public input. They would have been irresponsible not to go through that process. And I think the project is a better project because of going through that process of getting public input.

As I say, December 2001 is when the original approval for \$5 million happened. Then all of a sudden, in January 2004, the town was asked to resubmit their application—on a previously approved approval. Now we learn that that approval has been halved. So now the project is going to receive \$2.5 million, not \$4.9 million.

This is very difficult for the town of Gravenhurst, and it's unfair the way it has happened. They've been going about their business, getting all the approvals as quickly as possible, going through a consultative process—which is more than can be said for the government—and then they get the rug pulled out from under them three quarters of the way through the project. For the town of Gravenhurst, I think their total tax revenue from property taxes is something like \$4.8 million, so this is half their annual taxes, and it's a significant challenge. The mayor, I know, is concerned that it may jeopardize the financial stability of the town.

I look at some of the local newspapers:

“Wharf Cut Unjustified: Town.

“Town of Gravenhurst staff and politicians maintain that the government's claim that changes to the Muskoka wharf project are responsible for the significant reduction in funding for the project are unfounded.

“I don't believe there is merit in their reasons for reducing the funding,” said Mayor John Klinck. “The project got larger and we were given assurances that the full amount of funding would be forthcoming and we acted on good faith. If you go searching for a reason to withdraw or cancel funds, you'll find one, but you don't do it when a commitment has been made and someone has acted on that commitment.”

You know, I think what the government has done is absolutely awful. It's partisan, and it's hurtful for the town of Gravenhurst.

Mr Hudak: Did your Liberal candidate talk about that in his campaign?

Mr Miller: There was no mention whatsoever in the campaign. We didn't hear a darned thing about Muskoka being considered to be taken out of the north until they actually did it, and there was no consultation.

Look at what Gord Adams, chair of the district of Muskoka, said: “Adams insulted, Calls Timing of Northern ‘Chop’ a Slap in the Face.” You see, after the

meeting with Mr Sorbara, they got a promise that Mr McGuinty would meet with them before Muskoka was removed from the north. The meeting happened to be set up for a couple of weeks from then. Well, it happened to be the day after the government introduced this bill, Bill 149, to remove Muskoka from the north. Even though they saw the bill was introduced, they still came down to meet with Mr McGuinty. But what happened? He bailed on them, didn't even attend the meeting and instead had the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing meet with them. So, “Adams insulted, Calls Timing of Northern ‘Chop’ a Slap in the Face....

“In what Adams called ‘a slap in the face,’ the province introduced legislation that would finalize Muskoka's cut from the north just hours before the meeting was to take place. In addition, both the Premier and Sorbara cancelled their attendance.

“Adams said he told the minister that he found the province's actions ‘quite insulting.’” Party politics were blamed.

The mayor of Muskoka Lakes, Susan Pryke, adds some comments: “Muskoka Lakes mayor Susan Pryke said she too reiterated to the minister that seasonal residents alter the assessment of the average family income in the district.” So you have the wealthy cottagers, who do not give a true picture of the real people who live and work there year-round.

“Gravenhurst mayor John Klinck views Muskoka's cut from northern Ontario as ‘party politics’”—of the worst kind, I might add.

“I continue to believe that Muskoka is part of the north because of historical significance, socio-economic indicators and the area's physical attributes.

“‘The district was founded based on its raw resources, lumbering and tourism. We have no commercial or industrial tax base, we have a huge amount of managed forest and the people who live and work in this area make less money than many in communities further north of Muskoka,’” the mayor said.” That was Mayor Klinck of Gravenhurst.

“‘The decision was not based on any evidence or historical facts,’ said Adams. As a result, he said he and others believe the decision is ‘punitive.’

“‘What else are we to make of it?’ asked Adams. ‘Other than the fact that a couple of ministers have taken it upon themselves to penalize Muskoka?’”

That tells you what the mayors and elected officials in Muskoka think. Gord Adams has also pointed out that it wasn't just in 1999 that Muskoka became part of the north. Muskoka was classified as part of northern Ontario in the mid-1960s, until the electoral boundaries changed and Muskoka and Georgian Bay were lumped together. That was when Muskoka was connected to southern Ontario through the northern Simcoe area of Midland-Penetanguishene as part of this riding. Back then, Muskoka was told it couldn't be part of the north because that would mean Simcoe would have to qualify as well. The realignment of boundaries took place in the late 1990s, and I might point out that the federal government

recognizes Muskoka as being part of the north. In fact, in the election campaign, the Prime Minister was in the riding. And what did he say?

Mr Hudak: Paul Martin?

Mr Miller: This is Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada: "As far as I'm concerned, when I came up here, I was coming to northern Ontario. Unless there's been a tectonic shift in the Precambrian plates, I'm still, as far as the federal government and all our programs are concerned, in northern Ontario." He added, "I don't agree with that decision, and I'm certainly prepared to do whatever I can to help in that regard." That was the Prime Minister of Canada when he visited the riding. So the federal government recognizes Muskoka as being part of the north, and continues to recognize Muskoka as being part of the north.

If you look at Ontario, northern Ontario is comprised of districts; southern Ontario is comprised of counties. After this change is made, Muskoka will be the only district not in northern Ontario.

Muskoka was created 135 years ago, and for 110 of those years Muskoka was part of the north, so it isn't something that happened in 1999 when Parry Sound-Muskoka became one riding.

1620

Muskoka going out of the north affects many different programs in Muskoka, programs that you don't think about. For example, the YWCA runs a program called Girlz Unplugged, which teaches about violence and helps protect young women against violence. Unfortunately, that was funded through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, and there's no longer funding for that program. So the program is unfunded. Luckily, for this year, they made a presentation to the district of Muskoka, and the district of Muskoka recognized the value of that program and is going to fund it for this year. But that is another of the valuable programs that are funded by this.

We have to look at other decisions this government has made which are punitive and, you have to say, partisan in nature. Look at the closing of the Frost Centre. If ever a decision was ill-considered, to save a measly, I believe it's \$1.3 million a year—and once again, without consultation. They have made a decision—a very unwise decision, in my opinion—to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre. They made the decision, and a week later it was pretty much closed. Wouldn't it have made a lot more sense to keep it open and tell the people in the communities interested that unless we find ways of saving \$1.3 million in operating costs, then six months or a year later we are going to close it? I can tell you there are all kinds of groups that would have come out of the woodwork to help save the Leslie M. Frost Centre. I know the member from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Laurie Scott, and I will continue to fight to see the Frost Centre reopen.

Mr Hudak: What if they rename it the Sorbara Centre; will that help?

Mr Miller: To be honest, we'd be fine with that. If that's what it takes to get the Frost Centre reopened, I

would be fine with it, without question. But that's another example of a program that has been very worthwhile. The centre has been closed in a partisan way that I'm very upset about.

Getting back to Bill 149, I have a little problem with some of the other actions and some of the other things that will be carried out with this bill. There are some tax credits which are quite significant and are being cancelled by this bill. This act cancels nine tax credits worth \$85 million, including the provincial sales tax on vehicles purchased by those with disabilities. What is the logic of the government cancelling a tax rebate to help assist those with disabilities to purchase a necessary vehicle?

Mr Hudak: A tax hike on the disabled.

Mr Miller: Basically, yes, that is a tax hike. I would just love to hear the logic of why they're cancelling it. I think they said not enough people have taken advantage of it. We've heard questions about people who took advantage of it because they saw it was still listed on the Web site of the government, and now the government won't honour it. I have a lot of problems with cancelling that tax rebate.

The Ontario home ownership savings plan: What about young families who are trying to buy their first house? They had this program, very beneficial for first-time homeowners, to help make it possible for them to buy their first home. Now we see that tax savings plan, if this legislation passes, is being cancelled. We're at a time when we're seeing a drop in housing starts, so it seems like a very bad time to be closing a very worthwhile tax credit.

The workplace child care tax incentive is another very worthwhile tax credit, and it's very surprising that the government would be cancelling this. The workplace accessibility tax incentive is another very worthwhile tax incentive that's being cancelled. The corporate income tax incentive for self-generated electricity is repealed, and it's repealed retroactively, back to November 25, 2002.

I would have to argue that I can't see the sense in cancelling any of these tax credits. They all seem very worthwhile to me, and I'm quite surprised that the government has taken it upon itself to cancel these tax credits.

I only have a little bit of time left. Obviously, I'll be voting against this bill, in particular because it's removing Muskoka from the north, but also because it's cancelling these many worthwhile tax credits.

I would like to bring up the answer by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines to my question about Highway 17 today, because it was basically a non-answer. Our leader, Mr Tory, and I are going to be visiting Thunder Bay later this week. We'll be there for a couple of days. The last time I was there, the number one issue, when I went to the cancer care centre, when I met with business people, was the fact that they want Highway 17 four-laned from Nipigon to Shabagua Corners, because at that section, there's just one highway; it's Highway 17/11. They told me that it closed something

like a hundred times last year, and it's a real safety concern. Yet we've seen no plans, no announcements by this government to four-lane that section of highway.

I asked the Minister of Northern Development and Mines a very serious question today about that section of highway and also about the section east of Nipigon, where we've seen many washouts in October. It was closed for many days at a time, and people had to drive all night to get around these washouts. And yet the minister basically gave me a non-answer this afternoon, so I was very disappointed by that. I think I'm going to have to ask him again before I get up north.

I'll be voting against this bill. I'm very disappointed to see the government going ahead with its plan to remove Muskoka from the north.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I'm very pleased to rise today to obviously support this wonderful bill. Just in response to Mr Miller, I must say how pleased I am to hear Mr Miller's support for the northern Ontario grow bonds plan. That's terrific, and we thank you for that.

Under the apprenticeship training tax credit, I think it's very advisable to understand that according to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2003 skilled trades survey, within the next 15 years, 52% of skilled tradespeople are expect to retire. This apprenticeship training tax credit will enable fine institutions like Mohawk College in Hamilton West to encourage young people to participate in this new skilled training.

We are investing in our workforce by transforming Ontario's apprenticeship training program, and we invested \$11.7 million additional monies annually, to be invested by 2006-07, to expand the number of young people registering in apprenticeship training programs. This is a very important component of developing a very strong and healthy economy in Ontario.

Our investment in apprenticeship will address the expected wave of retirements, as I mentioned a minute ago, in skilled trades and will certainly help to build the kind of strong and prosperous Ontario that we are all looking forward to. That means, in fact, good jobs and a better future for our young people.

Speaking of futures for our young people, I was really surprised to read the Sudbury Star reporting that Mr Klees had said that, in his mind, "northern Ontario is northern Ontario," and Muskoka is not. That was really contrary to some of the other material that we heard. He went on to say, "I think we have to draw the line somewhere and I'm not sure that the Muskoka region qualifies." That was shocking, actually.

I thank you for this time to support our bill.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I first want to stand and acknowledge the tenacity and hard work of the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka in standing up for his riding, and also the punitive action taken by the Minister of Finance in eliminating that area from entitlement to the northern Ontario heritage fund and other opportunities like the northern health travel grant. It's punitive,

unnecessary and unkind. It's one more symptom of the kind of government we're dealing with. They don't care and they don't listen, specifically to the area where Mr Miller operates.

Even his question today to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is a further indication of saying one thing and then doing another thing. Mr Miller's question on Highway 17 was about public safety and accessibility, and just living in otherwise difficult circumstances in the north. There was no answer, and that's the tragedy. There was a lot of blah, blah, blah and no answer.

1630

I look at this bill and it's really a tax hike by any other name. Bill 149 is a rather onerous bill. I'll be speaking on it later. Hopefully our whip, Mr Dunlop, will give me some time—I put that on notice. There's actually \$85 million in clawbacks. What they're actually doing here is alarming. If people of Ontario knew and listened—because we'll be outlining this. I'm surprised. The minister of family and children's services should know that the workplace child care tax incentive created spaces for working families to bring children to the workplace. The employer was incented to provide appropriate care and accommodations for the children. Cancelled, not one thoughtful—what they want is a public sector, public-administered, regulated, blah, blah, blah. No flexibility is what I'm concerned about.

There are other things, and with your attention, Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Hamilton East.

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise and make comments on the debate provided by the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. I thought that his comments were extremely sensitive to the area that he represents. I thought he raised a number of significant issues, not only in regard to the specifics about Bill 149 and how it's going to effect his particular riding and the people that live there, but also, quite frankly, in regard to the processes undertaken by the government in terms of this particular bill and other pieces of legislation that they brought forward. And that is really just a lack of consultation and a lack of sensitivity to the various ridings that all of us represent across Ontario.

When I get the opportunity—in about a minute from now, or maybe five minutes or so from now—to begin my comments on Bill 149, some of the themes that were raised by the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka will be ones that I will follow up on as well. Not particularly the ones around his riding, of course, but some of the ones that he was raising near the end of his comments, those ones dealing with the tax cuts that are being provided in this bill, and the way that the government is favouring the corporate sector, particularly the banks and insurance companies, around capital tax credits that they're giving; and the way this government in fact has been complaining day after day in question period about their lack of ability to get things done right away, that everything's

going to take five years before anything is realized in terms of their agenda, but they're giving away money left, right and centre in Bill 149, money that could be very well used to enhance some of the programs that we've been raising that are needed so much in our communities across this province.

I look forward to the opportunity of reviewing for the watching public, the voters of Ontario, so they know exactly what this government is doing. They can't hide behind the bluster of their question period non-answers they have to account for things like Bill 149.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka's remarks, particularly as he talked about the highway strategy that we are developing in northern Ontario. I spent eight years in this Legislature when the previous government was in place, and almost every day I would get up in the House, or write a letter, and ask for some support. So I think that when you bring your leader up north, member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, make sure you tell the truth, which is that you wouldn't go near any of the issues, you wouldn't make any of the improvements.

Finally we've got a government that actually is listening to northerners and that had a northern section in its budget for the first time. Go back in all your budgets; you ignored the north completely. We do have a northern highway strategy, which is based on really developing and improving our roads in the north—it will be the first time. So I hope that you'll tell the truth when you're up there.

The fact is, year after year after year, you rejected our pleas for that, and in northwestern Ontario we particularly suffered from it. So when say you went and spoke to the chambers of commerce, let me tell you about grow bonds. Grow bonds were recommended by the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce. They went to the previous government and said, "We want to do this." They would not listen to them. Our leader at the time, Dalton McGuinty, later to become Premier, said, "We're going to endorse this, we're going to do it," and we are now doing it.

Mr Miller himself has endorsed that as being a good government policy. But all I can tell you—and I have the Minister of Transportation to back me up—is that our northern highway strategy is one we're very, very proud of.

Mr O'Toole, you shouldn't be shaking your hand at me either. The fact is, your government wouldn't do anything to help improve the roads in northwestern Ontario. We are going to do exactly that. In fact, we've got two passing lanes being built as we speak between Thunder Bay and Mackenzie, Pass Lake—things that wouldn't have happened under the previous government. We've got cost-sharing agreements between the federal and provincial governments, which the minister is very proud of. We're moving forward and making these things happen. I suggest to you that when you go up to Thunder Bay later this week, make sure you tell the truth and remind them of what you did not do in the past.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has up to two minutes.

Mr Miller: Thank you for the comments from the member from Hamilton West, who talked about grow bonds, and I would like to point out that I am in favour of grow bonds. I'm glad to see the government moving forward on that. I hope they don't mess it up by having all the value of it lost in too much administration costs. We certainly need more access to capital for businesses in northern Ontario, although I haven't heard anything lately—the government has been strangely quiet—about the northern tax incentive zone. I know that's something the people in northern and northwestern Ontario would like to see.

I would also like to point out that part of the government's election plan was northern councils. It has been 14 months since the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was appointed. On November 9, he did a press release, saying they're identifying potential candidates. How can it take so long to make northern councils? You're moving at a snail's pace, for crying out loud, at about the same pace the minister is moving on Highway 69. I drove up to Sudbury last week, expecting to see all kinds of construction. If there was anything the Minister of Northern Development and Mines talked about in opposition, it was Highway 69. And what have they announced? They announced 700 meters, and last year they announced two kilometres, I think it was. At that rate, it's going to be about 157 years before you complete the four-laning of Highway 69. And what about Highway 11? We haven't seen too much going on with Highway 11 either.

I look forward to going up to Thunder Bay. Perhaps the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North will be there to greet us and welcome us to the riding. I know the people of Thunder Bay-Superior North are very keen to see the four-laning of Highway 17, and I'll certainly be pushing for that at every opportunity. Because when I have been there in the past, one of the top issues they have raised is the four-laning of Highway 17 from Nipigon to Shabagua Corners.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to enter the debate on Bill 149. The first thing I'd like to say is that it's apparent from this bill that the government has a severe housekeeping problem, and I'm not just talking about the kind of housekeeping that means sweeping things under the carpet or the cobwebs that are sitting on the book of election promises of the government; rather, I'm referring to Bill 149 itself.

The reason I would call it a major housekeeping problem and explain it that way is because, quite frankly, Bill 149 is the result of a government that's been spinning its wheels, backtracking and letting things pile up for probably about 14 months now. As a matter of fact, this bill amends about 40 statutes, as I mentioned already in my questions and comments, with about 250 different changes. Quite frankly, sandwiched in between the pages of this massive bill are some proposals that the

New Democrats will never and would never be able to support.

The biggest reason I would never be able to vote in favour of this particular bill is because I cannot in good conscience stand and let the finance minister break yet another promise to the people of Ontario. There have been too many promises broken already. We hear them being raised day after day in question period by the NDP and by the opposition. What we're doing on this side of the House is really providing an opportunity to help the government save face, particularly right now. It's a crucial time for that to be done, and there's very little face left to be saved, as you know. But I think that, by debating this bill and by voting against, it gives the government that opportunity.

What we see reinforced with announcement after announcement and initiative after initiative is a really bad case of election amnesia. They just plain forget what it was they offered the voters of Ontario back in 2003. They just plain forget what it was they promised. Of course, they're coming up with an agenda that doesn't look anything like what the people voted them in to do. It's pretty frustrating on this side of the House when you have a bill, Bill 149, with some 40 pieces of legislation being affected and with some 250 changes in those 40 statutes that are being affected. A good pile of them, a good chunk of them, in no way reflect what the government said it was going to do for the people of Ontario.

1640

Maybe it's not a case of election amnesia; maybe it's a case of a duplicitous government that never intended to keep its promises. I wouldn't want to say that, though, because the people of Ontario are extremely disappointed. They're disappointed in what they're seeing, and although that would be my suspicion, if that's what's happening, that there was never any intention to keep those promises—if that is the case, that would be duplicitous.

However, I think what's really happening and what's really obvious, at the very least, at the minimum—so if it's not duplicitous and if it's not election amnesia, it's certainly a government that's prepared to play fast and loose with the promises they made to the people of Ontario. They're playing fast and loose with their commitments, and that way of playing is reflected on page after page in Bill 149.

I believe that a promise is a promise. I'm astounded that the members across the way are yet again prepared to break more promises. They talked in questions and comments just this very afternoon about how much they support this bill, how much pride they have in it, but they're supporting and lauding yet another documentation in black and white, in writing, broken promises over and over again. I'm going to give a couple of examples in case people who are watching are not quite sure what I'm getting at in terms of the broken promises that are once again in front of us in debate in this Legislature.

The first one is that this bill eliminates the capital tax on paid-up capital of corporations like big banks and

insurance companies. In the election, the Liberals said they would keep the capital tax. So what would that be? That would be a broken promise. Eliminating this particular capital tax will cost the Ontario treasury, over the time frame till 2012, \$1 billion over the next eight years. This is not what the government promised to do. They promised to do the opposite: They were going to keep it. Now they're eliminating it. What do you call that? You call that another example of McGuinty broken promises.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): And who is this money going to, in particular?

Ms Horwath: In particular, the lion's share of this money is going to be the big banks and the insurance companies. I think a full one quarter, \$250 million, of this particular capital tax giveaway goes to the big players.

Mr Marchese: Because they need the money.

Ms Horwath: Of course they need the money; we know that they're not getting month-after-month, quarter-after-quarter increases in their profits. Of course they are, and we're all watching as those profits skyrocket in the bank sector, particularly shaking our heads wondering, "How do we get in on that good deal?" I guess we get in on that good deal if we become banks and get more giveaways from the government of Ontario.

Eliminating this capital tax is an irresponsible move. It's a move that the New Democrats would never do. This is an active government that is more concerned about rewarding its corporate friends in the bank and insurance sector particularly, and its donors, than it is about ensuring a fair shake for regular, average Ontario taxpayers like those in the riding of Hamilton East whom I represent.

As corporate taxes surge, services are sliding. In my home community, there's an urgent need for things like second-stage housing, child care, low-income supports, affordable rents, all of these things that could be paid for by that tax if it were maintained. But no; instead, the government decides it's going to be giving big insurance and big banks a tax cut. That is not going to solve any of the concerns that are happening in my community this very day.

Banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions are going to get the greatest fraction, the greatest amount, of that particular tax cut. Canada's six big banks pay \$250 million of the roughly \$1 billion in capital taxes. So that \$250 million—straight to the big banks.

As over the next couple of years we continue to see, in the media reports, quarter after quarter, annual report after annual report, all of our big banks soaring in profits, we only need to look in one direction to find out why they're doing better month after month, quarter after quarter, year after year. They need to put that success, that gift, that resounding growth in their profits at the feet of the government. They can lie down and thank the government for this wonderful gift that in the meantime is going to prevent people in my community, for example, from getting the very basic needs for survival.

I can tell you what's happening. The dollars are going to be siphoned away from the programs and services that people need and put into the hands of the corporate shareholders and offshore owners. That's a lot of bunk, if you ask me.

It's interesting. In the city of Hamilton we recently had our social planning and research council do a report that talks about the continuing face of poverty in our community. In fact, one of things that is indicated in that report, not surprisingly, is that there continues to be a widening gap between the rich and the poor in this province but particularly in the city of Hamilton.

I've got to tell you, quite frankly, it's policies like this particular bill, Bill 149, where the government says, quite clearly, "We want to do this. We are proactively putting money in the hands of the rich and taking away from people who need it the most," because if that billion dollars was there, there would certainly be much more money available to help people who are living in poverty in the city of Hamilton. It not only says that there's a growing gap, but what it also says is that the people who are gaining from these very policies in Bill 149 are gaining at a greater rate and those who are at the lower end are losing at a greater rate. That gap just keeps widening and widening, and it's not by accident that these kinds of things are happening. In fact, it's the direct result of policies like these where governments refuse to recognize that they can't keep giving to the rich while they take away from the poor.

Just when the public thought that that crazy era of irresponsible corporate tax cuts had ended, here go the Liberals acting exactly like the Conservatives. Members of the public now see even more clearly—very clearly—that there's virtually no difference between those guys over there and these guys over here—no difference at all. The Liberals are doing exactly what the Conservatives would do. The only difference would be that the Tories would probably do it all by 2008. The Liberals are phasing it in over four years or so and 2012 is when it's going to be finally completely incorporated.

Do you know what? People in the province of Ontario need to remember that this government complains constantly about being cash-strapped. They complain constantly about the reason they're breaking their promises. The reason it's taking them so long to implement anything is because, quite frankly, "Oh, we have no money." How the heck do you expect to have money if you keep giving it away to the banks, the insurance companies and the big guys?

Not a day goes by when we don't hear about their deficit woes, dire warnings of belt-tightening. Every time we ask a question in the House, they say the same thing; they say they're broke. But eliminating the capital tax is going to mean the government is going to lose revenue at a time when the thing they need most is—guess what?—revenue. So \$1 million gone in 2004-05, \$40 million in 2005-06, \$80 million in 2006-07, \$110 million in 2007-08.

Let me say again for the people who are at home watching this afternoon, for the people who are tuned in

but really couldn't quite believe what they heard, let me say it one more time: More than \$1 billion is going to be lost from the treasury when the capital tax is finally implemented in 2012. Think about it: \$1 billion lost at a time when affordable housing is stalled. The construction of new affordable housing has not begun in this province—certainly not a commitment being fulfilled by this government. Despite all the high hopes the government builds up, they are not building any affordable housing.

At a time when not-for-profit child care is not being implemented at any speed that anybody would call decent, that promise to the children of Ontario is not being fulfilled. Why is that? Because there's not enough money. Why isn't there enough money? Because it's going to tax breaks like this one—at a time when shelter beds and second-stage housing units are being reduced when in fact they should be increased, especially when you look at the weather we're having this very day with the snow; at a time when more and more people are slipping deeper and deeper into poverty; at a time when income supports for the most vulnerable are still not enough to live on and they're losing more ground every single day.

I've got to tell you, these are not just broad Ontario statistics. It's very disturbing when you come from a community like mine that has just been informed that in terms of poverty rates we're the highest in Ontario now—tied with one other community that I will not mention. Nonetheless, that is a disturbing thing. It's extremely disturbing to have to debate this bill, knowing the government is purposely taking dollars out of the treasury and giving them back to the richest and wealthiest corporations, and the rest of the people in the riding that I represent are left to suffer.

1650

I think about specifics. I think about the fact that just on Friday there was a demonstration in our local minister's office from the people from second-stage housing. Those women and those advocates are very concerned because they are having to cut back second-stage housing units in the city of Hamilton. Why do they have to do that? Because they're not getting funded. So here is a very direct service that could have been funded that's not being funded, as a direct result of the dollars being siphoned off to go to the banks and insurance companies.

Last week we had political science students here from McMaster. They were lobbying for the personal needs allowance of people who are living in second-level lodging in the city of Hamilton. These people are surviving on \$116 a month—\$116 a month to take care of all their personal needs. These McMaster students were out there, visiting these very vulnerable people. They were talking to them and they were being shown and being exposed to the lifestyle these people are forced to endure because there isn't enough money to get them through a whole month. I'm talking basic issues of dignity, basic issues of quality and life, and all they're asking for is an increase from \$116 to \$160 a month. The funny thing about it is that that's the same request

they've had on the table for probably five or six years, and it's going on deaf ears. That's something that could very easily significantly change not only the lives of those people in second-level lodging homes in Hamilton but also the very neighbourhoods in which those lodging homes exist. When those people begin to have some more dignity, when they have a bit of money in their pocket that they could actually spend on the things they need, it makes for better communities, healthier neighbourhoods and a better economy.

It's very disturbing to see that while the little guy is getting nothing, the big guys are getting everything. It surprises me that any government member would vote to give money back to the highly profitable corporations and hold money back from the people in the province who are most in need. The Conservatives—maybe they made the cuts in the first place, so nothing they're going to do is going to surprise me. But for this government to follow the exact same path, I really do have to say shame on you. As usual, it seems like the little guy is getting the big boot.

I'm here to speak for the little guy because, you know what, it's not unknown to the people of this province that the New Democrats are often the people who are speaking for the little person in Ontario who deserves these dollars the most; not the mammoth corporations that already have all the advantages and that obviously have the ear of the government, but the regular person living in a community, trying to make ends meet, trying to understand, and in fact reeling from all the promises this government has managed to break in the last 14 months.

There seems to be a lot of heartlessness—I think that was the word used by one of the members earlier today—about what's in the bill. I have to tell you, giving a \$1-billion tax cut to the most well-off corporations is only the start, particularly when you juxtapose that against the growing amount of child poverty and the fact that there is so much homelessness and hurting in this province.

The bill also cuts the wheels out from under people with disabilities. The rebate, as we have already heard, for the modifications of vehicles used to transport disabled people is going to end with the passage of this bill. As you may know, the government will say, "Well, this money is not really being cut; it's being reallocated to the March of Dimes, and they're the ones that are going to be dealing with this program." But the bottom line is that the March of Dimes is in fact a means-tested program, and many people who qualified under the straight tax rebate program are not going to qualify under the March of Dimes program. In fact, people are going to find that where they were eligible before, they may not be eligible now. Once there was a program of help, with this particular tax credit, for people with disabilities and their vehicles. It's now going to be clawed back; it's going to be whittled away. Why? So that the government can give its corporate friends a really good tax cut.

There are many other acts that are being amended. I have a list of probably a page and a half long, everything

from the Agricultural and Horticultural Organizations Act, Capital Investment Plan Act, Gasoline Tax Act, Ministry of Revenue Act, and it goes on and on. I'm not going to read them all, because I already have a quite a sore throat. The bottom line is that it's an omnibus bill that gives the government—you know, it's a funny thing; my understanding is, and of course I wasn't here, that the government in fact was, when they were in opposition, very critical of the Conservative government with omnibus bills. My understanding is that they often railed against the omnibus bills when the previous government brought them forward. The bottom line is, look at what happens when they become government. They do the exact same thing. They bring through these omnibus bills and can't understand why the rest of us are a bit concerned about it.

The bottom line is, the Liberals said a lot of things in opposition, as we know, and they said a lot during the election campaign, and we can really see that all of it needed to be taken with a grain of salt. In fact, it needed to be taken with a whole salt mine, as far as I'm concerned.

They said they were going to be aggressive with energy efficiency. What does this bill do? It terminates the PST rebate for energy-efficient appliances. One of the first and most practical, affordable steps any family can make to cut its energy bill is to get rid of those old, hydro-sucking appliances and get those new Energy Star, high-efficiency type of models. But, of course, that's gone. It makes no sense at all that it's been cancelled.

There are many other things this bill does: rebates for converting the home to use high-end solar and wind power, something the government's touting as a new, progressive move in energy efficiency or energy savings or green power. But you know what? The bottom line is, your average household, your average Ontarian is never going to be able to put solar panels on their roof. It's just silly. So the government is claiming this is the big green issue here but, really, when you look at it, the government killed the program that would be the most effective in assisting the most families across Ontario, the most households, and in fact put something in place that very few are going to be able to take advantage of.

Another thing is things that they could have done. They could have dealt with the fact that the securities legislation could have been tightened up to save some of those people who are being bilked by scoundrels in that industry. Of course, that wasn't done. I've got lots of details on that, but I'm running out of time already. My goodness, how time flies when you're having fun.

The personal income tax incentives related to corporate tax incentives like the graduate transition tax credit, the workplace child tax credit, the workplace accessibility tax credit, the educational technology tax credit—somebody else mentioned that in their speech earlier today. The bottom line is, the government will say, "Nobody ever took advantage of any of those things anyway." Well, maybe what the government should have done was found a way to make those particular credits

accessible so that people could get the kind of help they needed to have accessible workplaces, to have a place where people with disabilities could go to work and gain an income that was decent and could sustain them and their families over time. It's not good enough to say, "Oh, nobody used it." It's a matter of taking responsibility for making it a functioning opportunity for people with disabilities.

Those are my comments. Thank you for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I listened to the member from Hamilton East. The question I have for her is, if she's talking about how this bill helps corporations and cuts their taxes, why did your party unanimously vote, along with the Conservatives, against our Bill 2, which rolled back \$2.3 billion in corporate tax cuts? You're going to have to explain that. I'm going to give you the opportunity to stand up and explain how you, who claims to be the great opponent of corporate tax cuts, the member from Hamilton East, voted against our party's commitment to roll back \$2.3 billion worth of tax cuts promised by the other party.

We had Bill 2, right here, An Act respecting fiscal responsibility. It says, "The Corporations Tax Act is amended." We rolled back those corporate taxes by \$2.3 billion. You voted with the Tories to keep those corporate tax cuts. I ask you to stand up on your feet to explain why your party voted unanimously to have those corporate tax cuts stay in the hands of the big corporations that you've just demonized.

She goes on talking about the capital tax. The capital tax is essentially a job killer. We're trying to create jobs. She talks about the fact that Hamilton needs jobs. You're not going to get jobs in Hamilton by whining about it. You're going to have to do something about it. So we want to get rid of this capital tax, which means that people can't hire people to work in companies, to create jobs. That's what the removal of the capital tax does.

So stop whining about it. Do something about it. Create some jobs for a change.

1700

Mr Dunlop: I thought the member from Hamilton East did an excellent job in her presentation. I thought she actually deserved more time, because she looked like she was just getting into it. I think she really brought out some good points.

I look at this bill, Bill 149, where the government is trying to put a couple of positive things in with a whole bunch of negatives. It's the \$85 million that bothers me. That's part of the money that came from the Ontario home ownership savings plan. I think that was a terrible move on the part of this government.

When there is a prediction that there will be a decline in the number of houses built in Ontario—we've already seen it this year and I understand it's estimated there will be a 12% decline next year—I can't understand why the government would not want to create an incentive to keep home building and home ownership alive and

strong in Ontario. Because at that rate all the folks in the trades and construction equipment suppliers get an opportunity to continue to make money, to invest in jobs and invest in the economy. Here we have a government that, in its very first kick at this economy, has decided to remove the Ontario home ownership savings plan, which is a plan that helps young people and first-time home-buyers. That's very disappointing.

I think a lot of people don't even realize this is happening at this point. It hasn't been well publicized. Certainly they haven't promoted it with any fancy press conferences or anything like that, but that is something that will hurt the economy of Ontario. It will hurt the jobs that will be created here and it will hurt young people trying to buy their first home in the province.

Mr Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague from Hamilton East for her vigorous 20-minute presentation here. You could tell that the broken promises of the Liberal Party take more than 20 minutes to deliver. It takes at least one hour to cover them adequately. Twenty minutes doesn't do it, and she raced through it.

Don't you love my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence, Mike Colle, who says that the capital tax is a job killer? Doesn't that sound very much like Mike Harris when he was there before? What's the difference? Here he is defending a capital tax reduction, most of which will go to banks and insurance companies, and he says that by doing this, it will create jobs. He is protecting the banks and the insurance companies—banks and insurance companies that gouge you on a daily basis. He's saying that they need a \$250-million break from now through the next eight or 10 years. No, they don't, Mike Colle. They are gouging us. These people don't need my help, especially after you broke your promise that you wouldn't do it and then did. Not one cent is being spent on housing, but you're going to find \$250 million to give to the banks. Not one penny is going to create housing.

And look at the duplicitous thing they've done around the minister cancelling the retail sales tax rebate for vehicles. Ten million dollars cancelled for the retail sales tax rebate, and then the Minister of Children and Youth Services and the Minister of Community and Social Services go out on the lawn and announce \$10 million for vehicle modification. It's the same money, just turned around the same way. That's duplicitous, my friends. That's the Liberal government for you, creating jobs, giving money to the banks while you're left high and dry.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

The member for Peterborough.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm delighted to make some quick comments on the remarks of the member for Hamilton East. It's interesting: When you talk to people who are involved in the social services sector of this province, they'll tell you that the problem with poverty started with the NDP government, in 1993, when they froze the rates of ODSP. They kicked the poor people of this province right in the teeth. Remember, they froze ODSP in 1993.

But let me get going here. They voted against Bill 2. What a sorry day in this Legislature: The people who always tell you that they're the great people of social conscience, on that day, on Bill 2, got together with the Tories and the Albany Club and voted against the repealing of the private school tax credit. They voted against the corporate rollback of the tax cuts. They had a great lunch that day at the Albany Club, the silk-stocking socialists and the Conservatives having lunch together, discussing how they wanted to not repeal the private school tax credit and the second round of the corporate tax credit.

But let me tell you what this does for seniors in this province. For the first time since 1995, we're going to increase the municipal tax credit for seniors by 25%. That means that 685,000 deserving seniors in this province will get an increased municipal property tax credit to offset some of the downloading costs that were given to this province by that party when they were in government by our good friend Al Leach when he was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He offloaded all those things to municipalities that they couldn't support and saddled senior citizens in this province with increased property taxes. Now, we're going to relieve that burden with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, you have two minutes to reply.

Ms Horwath: I find it very interesting. I want to thank the members from Eglinton-Lawrence, Simcoe North, my colleague from Trinity-Spadina and the member from Peterborough for their very interesting comments.

I have to say, the members on the government side certainly got riled up, and that's really good, because that tells me—it's the old adage that my mom used to say. She used to tell me, "Sticks and stones may break your bones, but you know what? Words will never hurt you." She always said to me, when people rely on mudslinging, when they rely on silly name-calling, it means they don't really have an argument to stand on. It means they're reaching for some way to discredit you, when they know very well that you've hit some really good arguments and put the issues on the table.

Quite frankly, that's what I saw from some of the members on the government side in their vehemence in trying to attack me personally. What they need to do is start realizing that they have a role to play in the prioritization of what their government is doing. It's they who have to account for that, not me, quite frankly. It's those people on the other side who need to understand that when they throw names and try to pretend to the public there is no reason why we should be opposing omnibus legislation—which they opposed every minute they had a chance when they were in opposition.

It's just a joke that they try to hide what they're doing by attacking the people who are doing their job and sticking up for the people of this province, letting them know all of the promises that are being broken by this government and all of the direction that those members

over there are taking. That's exactly the same as those people who got kicked out for that direction and put you in power. Shame on you. Shame on you for following the exact same road as your predecessor over here. You're the same people, and I think the people of Ontario recognize that. They very clearly understand it, and nothing you can say is going to help you now.

The Deputy Speaker: I think now we're ready for further debate.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this bill, Bill 149. It is an important bill for quite a number of reasons. It's a comprehensive bill with a large number of sections. As a matter of fact, it's quite thick.

As a northern member, one of the things that I am particularly impressed with in this bill is the legislation to go forward with grow bonds. That is very, very important to those of us who represent northern Ontario constituencies.

In northern Ontario we have not participated in the growth that the rest of the province, quite frankly, has seen over the last decade or so. In northern Ontario we still see a decline of population. We see declining enrolments in our schools. We see fewer and fewer people in many of our communities. The last decade has not been a great time for the northern economy.

For the first time, in fulfilling an election commitment, we have decided and in this bill are going forward with northern Ontario grow bonds, the part of our northern Ontario prosperity plan which helps northern communities attract and retain investment and jobs. The proposed bill establishes the corporation that will make loans to businesses in northern Ontario. The northern Ontario grow bonds program will help new and expanding businesses in northern communities and improve opportunities for entrepreneurs in the north. If passed, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines would administer this program, with the establishment of a northern Ontario grow bonds corporation reporting directly to the minister.

1710

I think that we on the government side are quite proud of this initiative. We know it doesn't solve every problem there is to solve in northern Ontario, but it is piece of the puzzle. We would expect, therefore, that all members of the House, from all political parties, will put aside their partisan rants and decide that supporting northern Ontario and northern Ontario grow bonds is a good thing to do and is something the north needs desperately. It is something I'm sure my friends from the other parties will want to support because it is just the right thing to do.

Another thing we are very interested in seeing in this particular bill is a section that deals with Ontario property tax credits as they relate to seniors. I think this is very important. I represent a constituency with a lot of folks with relatively low incomes who are in their senior years, and this bill will help them considerably. "The government is committed to ensuring that Ontario seniors live safely, with dignity, and as independently as possible."

What we're doing in this particular tax credit: This \$85-million initiative will benefit 685,000 senior families. It includes 33,000 senior families who do not currently benefit from this particular measure. The basic property tax credit would increase from \$500 to \$625, or by about 25%. It will leave about \$125 more in the pockets of low- and middle-income seniors this year and every year hereafter. The tax credit will continue to be income-tested. That is really important to the people I represent. It is money in their pockets.

The other end of the spectrum that we need to be talking about that's in this particular piece of legislation is the apprenticeship training tax credit. Our investment in apprenticeship will address the expected wave of retirements in the skilled trades. According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce skilled trades survey, within the next 15 years, 52% of skilled tradespeople are expected to retire. I'll repeat that: Within 15 years, half of our skilled tradespeople are expected to retire. As well, 41% of the respondents, ie, the chamber of commerce, anticipate that they will face severe skills shortages in the industry within five years.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): No; already now.

Mr Brown: My good friend from Davenport tells me that it's happening now, and it is, across the province, particularly right here in Toronto.

What this particular tax credit will do is pay \$5,000 of an eligible apprentice's salary each year for up to three years. That means good jobs and a better future for our young people. Corporations and other unincorporated businesses would be eligible for a 25% refundable tax credit on eligible expenditures incurred with respect to eligible apprenticeships in the construction, industrial, motor power and certain service trades. For small businesses with total payroll costs not exceeding \$400,000, the tax credit rate would be increased to 30%.

This is an important investment. It will transform our workplace apprenticeship training programs. That is not only good for those people enrolled in these apprenticeship training courses but it is critical for our economic prosperity.

As we think about the particular measures that are here in this bill, I want to point out what people may think are smaller technicalities, but they are important. For example, we're clarifying the definition of "permanent establishment" for the purposes of the employer health tax. What the heck does that mean? It means that if your place of business is in Ontario, you'll pay employer health tax for Ontario-based employees. So what does that mean? It means that sports teams and other large employers with establishments elsewhere will pay their full share of employer health tax, like the Blue Jays and other teams.

We're also making sure that stock options don't get preferential employer health tax treatment. That means you won't be able to have fancy deals that exempt you from paying taxes on some of your income.

We're making sure that municipal electric utilities don't get taxed twice when they reinvest sales of electricity assets into electricity.

We're making sure that people can't use foreign income-tax credits to get the Ontario tax reduction, which is targeted to those of most modest means.

Mr Leal: Another loophole closed.

Mr Brown: You're right: another loophole closed.

This is particularly important to me and to constituencies with a lot of First Nations people. We're facilitating the process for native fuel retailers to get refunds. I know that's particularly important to my friend Willie Pine and other people in that business.

We're closing the loopholes. We're making progress. We intend to create more jobs in the province of Ontario and come up with a fairer, more reasonable, more sensible tax regime.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to rise in response to this debate. I find it interesting that the member from Algoma-Manitoulin speaks about the desire of this government to create jobs and build economic stability. There isn't a day that goes by when there isn't some other bombshell dropped as a result of actions taken by this government, which, quite frankly, is shutting down places of employment and driving them out of the province.

Here's the latest. This is a press release I just got this afternoon. It's a news release from Bot Construction in Oakville, Ontario. It says, "A 'gag order' inserted into Ministry of Transportation of Ontario ... contract specifications breaches the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms," according to Bot Construction's lawyers.

And here's the clause that now has been inserted into MTO contracts: "The contractor shall not make any public comment, public ceremony or public announcement without the prior written approval of the owner," that being MTO. "The contractor shall refer all media inquiries related to the project to the owner," or to the MTO. It's a gag order—something that has never been in government contracts before.

"The new provision," this press release goes on to say, "in MTO contracts with road and bridge contractors could make it virtually impossible for contractors to alert the media, and therefore the public, to issues that may arise on projects worth millions of tax dollars."

This is the kind of action on the part of this government that is stifling economic activity in this province. It will literally shut down businesses. I don't know what it is that this government is trying to prove, but it certainly isn't in the best interests of the people of Ontario or of Ontario's economy.

1720

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to rise to make comments on the speech that was just given by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I have to say that, of course, what he took the time to do was to explain, from his perspective, some of the things that he thought were good things that this bill is going to do. I have to go back to the fact that, certainly from my perspective, the things he purports to be positive do not overshadow the things that I think are extremely negative. I really do believe

that the government's priorities are a bit out of whack, particularly when you look at a situation where you know we have increasing difficulty in many communities from one end of this province to the other. We have many broken promises that this government is simply not going to be able to fulfill. We keep hearing the government telling us that this promise is still going to be fulfilled, this promise or that promise, although it might take three years instead of any time soon.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Seven years. After the next election.

Ms Horwath: It might take seven years, after the next election, and those kinds of things.

Do you know what? The people of Ontario are quite disillusioned and quite disappointed with the lack of action by this government, and that action is not going to be in any way increased or in any way made quicker with things like Bill 149, which simply continues to give money back to those who have a lot of it and avoids doing some of the things—

Interjection.

Ms Horwath: Do you know what? Let's not even talk about some of the things like child care and second-stage housing; let's talk about things like hydro rate caps and auto insurance. Let's talk about other promises that were made. This particular \$1 billion, over the time frame between now and 2012, could have helped to alleviate some of that pain that every single person living in the province of Ontario who has a car or who has to deal with hydro bills is going to be experiencing. Quite frankly, it's a matter of priority. The government obviously has a priority to give money back to their wealthy friends.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): It's a pleasure to rise in support of the fall budget bill, Bill 149. I've listened to all of the speakers.

One of the main responsibilities of government is to live within its means, to live within the dollars it has to spend. There's no question it's difficult at times to make the decisions you have to make, but make them you must. I acknowledge there are philosophical differences. I can recall back when there was a project called the northern development project and the minister at the time, when it was requested that he go north, suggested that he might have to "put on his boots," demeaning, to say the least, in the respect that he wasn't giving the north in terms of the needs that it had.

I also recognize that philosophically there are people who are prepared to spend their way out of almost anything. The fact of the matter is that that previous government, the NDP, put us into a huge deficit that will, in fact, go for years on our children's children. There's no question.

Yes, you're right, we have to go forward and live within our means. It's part of our responsibility to do so and make the decisions, some of which are uncomfortable for others across the way. But instead of standing up and saying what the alternative options are, they stand up and yell at you. There's a huge difference; it's called

"debate." If you have a better alternative, you should present it and put it forward instead of yelling at somebody when you don't like what they've got. What purpose does that provide to anyone, especially for someone who's listening, to try to learn the differences within the debate? There is none.

I think it's really important that we recognize that when we talk about a fall budget, we have to acknowledge that there are decisions that are difficult. Previous governments made difficult decisions. But there is no question in my mind that the issues that are raised here within this bill provide significant incentives that are desperately needed in the north and have been for many years.

I'm delighted to be able to support this bill.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Speaker, I want you to know that I won't be supporting the bill. I can't, in all honesty, even begin to support something like this bill. It's having a very negative impact on the citizens of our province.

It's interesting to hear them all bragging about the north now, because that's actually the name of the bill. For some reason, one little part of it has something to do with the north, so they're going to name it after the north.

What will be really interesting in this House will be to compare the record of the previous government after its last four years in power and this government after four years in power to see exactly what they've accomplished for the north.

Let's start with highways. I can tell you that Highway 11 and Highway 69 have seen incredible improvements under the Mike Harris and Ernie Eves governments. I think there's only about 42 kilometres left of Highway 11 to complete, so it will be four-laned completely between Barrie and North Bay, plus there have been a series of road improvement projects on Highway 69/400, which has seen major improvements and many hundreds of millions of dollars spent to see that highway four-laned as well. Since this government came to power 14 months ago, I haven't seen a backhoe on the site, unless it was from a previous contract, or any construction taking place on either of those highways. I tell you, if there is anything at all that could help the north, it has been to make sure there's a good transportation system to the north for the economic development of the north. We're not seeing that; we haven't seen it to date. We've got all these fancy terms and strategies but no money and certainly no road improvement projects. That will tell the tale, and we'll be able to compare that after this government has been in power for four years.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes.

Mr Brown: I appreciate the comments from the members from Oak Ridges, Hamilton East, Etobicoke Centre and Simcoe North. I am a little bit perplexed, not knowing why members would not want to support the northern Ontario grow bonds initiative, but I guess that's the choice the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democrats are going to make today, or when this comes to a vote. I think northerners will remember whether

those parties wanted to participate in the continued economic future of northern Ontario and the future of our young people. I think this bill will very much define whether members of those two parties believe in improving economic opportunities in northern Ontario. A vote against this would indicate that they just do not support northern Ontario initiatives.

The member for Simcoe North talked about highways. We're investing \$256 million in northern highways this year, which is a considerable amount of money, and we have a northern Ontario highway plan being developed so we can make sure that some of the deficiencies left to us over the past decade will be addressed.

I want to say to members that this bill is an attempt to bring financial responsibility back to this jurisdiction. Deficits are important. Fiscal responsibility is important. Without those two things, we cannot have a dynamic, energetic and buoyant economy. I would urge all members, not just for the sake of northern Ontario but for the sake of this province, to support this very, very important budget measure.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'm very pleased to raise some concerns with respect to Bill 149. As has been referenced by one of the government members, this is a rather large bill—209 pages. I've had a chance to read through a significant amount of it. There are several hundred new tax calculations, new tax modifications, new tax adjustments that generally won't become known to the public until their accountant advises them of it and the income tax forms are amended accordingly.

I want to raise a couple of issues about the bill itself, but I also want to raise some questions because the bill speaks to health services. It creates new taxing authorities for the employer health tax and for calculation of the health tax credit so that there are opportunities for people to receive less rebate from the provincial government for their medical expenses.

At the outset, I want to indicate that part of this Treasurer's budget includes a substantial increase for the Minister of Health to increase his administrative budget by about 7%. He's increasing his immediate administration inside the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Health, and yet he has told hospitals that collectively they have to live with a 4.3% increase. Hospitals like mine in Burlington, the Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, are receiving 0.5%. They are in the process of identifying beds to be closed, they are identifying staff to be laid off and they are identifying procedures and operating procedures which they will no longer be providing. They've already shut down access to 20 chronic rehab beds in our community, and we are now operating with fewer beds than we had 15 years ago.

1730

The failure in this budget to make any adjustment to Ontario hospitals, and in particular that handful of hospitals that received less than a 4% increase, of which Joseph Brant was one of the worst examples of the fiscal

kind of starvation diet budget—let me correct that: the worst example of the starvation budget which the Minister of Health has provided. Care will be compromised in those communities, so it's of little comfort to many Ontarians, as Bill 149 passes, that it contains within it the loss of some tax credits and the increases to some taxes in our province that compound even further their ability to cope with their household as well as their health expenses.

I say they have a problem coping with their health care expenses because this is the government that delisted chiropractic, that said it has no value to medical needs, that it's not a priority health service in this province, and yet the evidence is compelling that chiropractic service provides so much more than just relief. It provides a medical condition that allows the public to be more accessible, to be more ambulatory, to do more of their daily chores—physiotherapy as well, and eye care services, which have been cut.

If I were to look inside this bill through the eyes of a senior citizen, on the one hand they may be quite pleased that the government has increased the seniors' property tax credit by \$125. But by the same token, this government by its second budget has eliminated the seniors' property tax credit, which was the natural extension of the previous government's commitment to freeze property taxes, which we did for seniors; our government's commitment to reduce the impact of education property taxes, which were the fastest-rising taxes seniors had to cope with—this was the extension of our promise to move toward removing the education property tax because it is a wealth tax, and seniors are house-rich and income-poor, unable to afford to pay for their tax increases.

For the government to suggest that \$125 a year is in some way going to offset the \$450 to—in my riding the average was much higher than \$450. I profess, or confess, that there are more citizens in my community who are living above the poverty line than in some other members' in this House, so their property tax rebate under the education property tax rebate, which the Liberals cancelled, would have been closer to \$1,000. That \$1,000 would be rather important, whether you are renting an apartment or paying property taxes, very important to people who today are going to pay 20% more on their hydro bills as a result of this government breaking its promise to freeze rates. Particularly, it was done to protect vulnerable persons on fixed incomes, like the disabled, seniors and the poor, who can't cope with double-digit increases for their hydro bills. These are just a few of the kinds of changes the government has brought in that adversely affect seniors.

We have another example here with this sleight of hand that occurred with the removal of the vehicle tax credit, which a very large number of seniors did utilize as a means of allowing them to afford a replacement vehicle so they could transport a loved one who is disabled. I find it passing strange that the government trumpeted its announcement of its expansion, from \$10 million to \$20

million, of the home and vehicle modification program for the most severely disabled individuals in the province but stole the money out of this program so that they netted out on the balance sheet. It wasn't new money from the government; it was money they shifted by cancelling this program in order to transfer it to the other program.

If you check with the people at the March of Dimes, they'll tell you that they welcome the new money. But there's no way they can get \$20 million out the door when they could barely get \$10 million out last year. They don't have the infrastructure to double that program. What it does is compromise a whole series of seniors, particularly women who are in the care of a frail elderly or disabled spouse, especially since generally the male spouse is the predominant breadwinner and has the higher income and the woman has access to far less money, so this kind of tax rebate was very, very important.

When this was cancelled, it was indefensible and quite immoral for the government to continue advertising on their Web site for almost six months that people were eligible to go and buy cars and get the tax rebate. As I mentioned to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, that is an illegal act in the province of Ontario. One of the most extreme violations of consumer protection in this province is to induce people to buy on the promise of a rebate when it doesn't exist. Fines in the hundreds of thousands of dollars are appropriate in such a case, and the government just turned a blind eye to the whole episode. I want to acknowledge my colleague Mr Prue, from Beaches-East York, who, along with myself, but predominantly himself, raised this issue with the minister. There are hundreds and hundreds of seniors and others who didn't benefit.

There are amendments to the Income Tax Act that are going to change the calculation for the medical expenses credit, which will adversely affect people in this province. There's the elimination of the workplace child care tax credit in this bill, which is not a positive step forward.

There is harmonization with the federal government on tax collection on fees and other charges. On one hand, the government is out because it couldn't get the money for its Best Start child care program in this province, so its response was to say to the federal government, "We're not getting our fair share." Well, I warn the government to be very careful about getting in bed with the federal government, which sees Ontario as the goose that keeps laying the golden eggs to keep our confederation together. Nowhere will that hurt us more than with harmonized tax policies between Ottawa and Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm pleased today to rise in support of Bill 149. I believe these latest budget measures are going to be key in encouraging economic strength and diversity in Ontario. I'm especially interested in the issue of commercialization of some of our research, especially as it relates to my own riding of Ottawa-Orléans. Not far away, we have the

National Research Council, the Ottawa Health Research Institute and the Life Sciences Council, and this legislation is certainly going to assist us in promoting our research and trying to get it commercialized, where the real jobs are. This is something extremely important that we go ahead with.

Through the Ontario commercialization investment fund, Bill 149 will provide \$36 million to leverage up to \$120 million in additional research grants. This is going to be extremely important. This is the seed money we need to get the jobs out of the excellent research that's being done locally. We're not doing a good enough job of it, and this government is committed to making sure that the research is turned into jobs that Canadians, Ontarians and Ottawans need.

Having been in business for many years, I also support the elimination of the capital tax by 2012. This is not being done very quickly, but it's very important legislation that is going to be positive for corporations so that we have stronger corporations, ones that want to build up their asset value. By eliminating this tax, we're going to grow the economy more. This is extremely important.

I think this bill has introduced a lot of fiscally sound measures that are going to have a positive impact on growth and diversification, on job creation, on investor confidence and on other areas of our economy. I give it my strong support.

1740

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Burlington for an excellent speech. He wanted to get a full 20 minutes in today. Unfortunately, the time ran out so he couldn't get that time in. But he brings some extremely good points forward.

What he didn't get involved with in his comments was the seniors' tax credit. It's almost hilarious to listen to the government bring this forward now. It's sort of a pittance of the law that was in place at the time of the election last year, which they repealed as soon as they got elected, which helped the senior citizens in Ontario. We had it in place for exactly the reason you're saying today you brought it forward for, to help them out, and it was law. You repealed that. It helped more people with more money. I believe your amount is \$125 million; we would have helped out with \$450 million. That would have been the benefit to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Mr Jackson didn't get an opportunity today to even mention that. He's obviously someone—as a former minister in that particular department—who knows a lot about the issues surrounding seniors. I know he has his own radio talk show where seniors call in and he explains some of the things the government is doing and some of the ways to try to overcome this government. I compliment him for that. He's also the minister who brought forward the 20,000 new long-term-care beds in Ontario that this government—which is now officially opening some of them—is actually taking credit for; for beds that Mr Jackson announced and we funded. That's pretty pathetic, but that's the bottom line. I've even seen that in the budget. I think you're taking credit for 3,700

beds that would open this year, and, of course, we allowed those tenders and RFPs to take place.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Mr Jackson's great speech.

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make some comments on the speech by the member for Burlington. I thought he gave an excellent overview of what Bill 149 is not about. I think he laid it out in the order of things that are near and dear to his heart. He talked about how Bill 149 is not about improving our health care system, it's not about helping out our hospitals, it's not about helping out our seniors, it's not about dealing with some of the things that, in fact, I raised myself—he didn't raise them—things like domestic violence, child poverty and a proper, fully funded and immediately implemented model for child care that would be supported by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, for example. It's not about affordable housing or film industry tax credits.

The member for Burlington was actually quite clear in his disappointment that the government has put together this particular bill and not addressed some of the major issues that are on the minds of the people of Ontario. In fact, as we have heard over and over again, it is about the government increasing administrative budgets, for example, for some of the ministers; it is about breaking promises to the people of Ontario; it is about giving gifts to big banks and big insurance corporations, to the detriment of all of the rest of us; and it is about an omnibus bill that covers off over 40 statutes with over 250 amendments. It is about a big, huge attempt at house-keeping while at the same time trying to persuade the public that they're actually doing things. The problem is, they're not doing the things they promised to do, and they're doing all kinds of things that nobody knew they were going to do. That, in the crux of it, is the problem with Bill 149 and why we'll certainly not be supporting it.

Mr Brown: I appreciate the comments from the member for Burlington, and I just want to take a few seconds to talk about eliminating the PST rebate for modified vehicles and redirecting the funding. That's exactly what's happened.

Mr Jackson: You're admitting it was a trade-off?

Mr Brown: Sure. Absolutely.

Ontario is redirecting the funding that provided retail sales tax rebates on vehicles purchased for persons with permanent disabilities to a program that gives priority—and I want the member from Burlington to talk about this—to those people with disabilities. People with the most need get the money.

Some \$8 million is being redirected from the PST program, plus an additional \$2 million is being provided, to increase funding for the home and vehicle modification program to \$10 million annually. That is more than four times the previous year's funding.

The home and vehicle modification program is income-tested and provides grants of up to \$15,000 per home or vehicle modification to people with physical disabilities. Unlike the previous RST rebate, the home

and vehicle modification program gives priority to applicants who are most in need, and helps them to stay in their homes.

I'm sure the member for Burlington understands that, that there are finite resources within government, and that it is a government's responsibility to see that the money given to people with disabilities goes to those people who are most in need. I would appreciate it if he addresses that in his response.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Burlington, two minutes to respond.

Mr Jackson: There so much missing in Bill 149, and there are a few things in there that still need commenting on.

The cancelling of the Ontario home ownership savings plan: They're actually going to penalize people, force them to buy a home and clear out their account, or else they have to pay tax on everything. That's like putting a gun to people's heads. What's the principle of a savings plan for young people if now you're going to turn on them and say, "If you don't empty your bank account right away, you're going to pay tax on it"?

I'm concerned that there are provisions in here to give municipalities the right to increase taxes for hydro rights-of-way. So they get to do is tax more; then the local utility, owned by the municipality, gets to charge more for its hydro, and they pass it on through. There is no limit to the number of innovative ways this government keeps coming up with to charge more on the hydro bill, and it's right in Bill 149.

The elimination of the workplace child care tax credit: What is wrong with child care in large accommodations? We have one here at Queen's Park. It's a great idea. It works.

I've talked about harmonizing, the amendments to the Municipal Act.

There's one major disappointment in this bill, and I'm angry about it. That is the failure of this government to deal in Bill 149 with the problems associated with the over 4,000 Stelco pensioners and the situation they find themselves in. Many of them are constituents in my riding and the area. The fact of the matter is that there is a pension shortfall, according to actuaries, of \$861 million. Nothing in this legislation, nothing in this bill, does anything to prop up, to support, to strengthen, to encourage the pension benefits guarantee fund. It took a previous Conservative government to find the funds and to make the commitment to save Algoma so that it could compete in the global market.

This government's done nothing. Every company that is competing with Stelco, every company that is trying to do a takeover bid was able to eliminate its pension responsibilities, and they won't do one thing to help Stelco in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Bisson: I'm so glad to be here with you. I'd be so much happier if I could do this sitting in my seat, but the rules of this House don't allow me. So if I do this, it's because I've got a sore foot.

I want to speak to a couple of parts in this bill, and I also want to relate it to an announcement the Premier made in the riding up in northern Ontario on the weekend. Part of this bill deals with some of the things the government announced in northern Ontario on Thursday, and one of those things was the grow bonds.

I just want to put on the record—because I was talking to the media and other people about this in the riding when it was announced—that I thought the big news on Thursday, quite frankly, was the heritage fund. I thought, for the government to finally accept the argument that we've been making for a long time, which is the heritage fund—

Mr Brown: The guys who took \$60 million out of it?

Mr Bisson: I'm giving you some credit, and you're going to yell at me? Come on, Mike.

1750

I thought the issue that made some sense was the government's decision to reverse the current policy on the northern heritage fund, to move it from being a capital infrastructure program back to what it was originally designed for: an economic development program for northern Ontario. I think that was really the big news on Friday.

The other stuff the government announced by way of the Premier, some of it which is contained in this bill, the grow bonds and the northern Ontario strategy—I forget what you called it—are really a bit of a rehash of things that already exist out there.

For example, grow bonds: If you would remember, similar mechanisms were put in place by various governments over the past number of years. Are they a bad thing? Of course not; they're not a bad thing. I wouldn't vote and say, "This is a terrible thing and I can't support it." It is obviously going to have some benefit. But the basic issue for northern Ontario is, if you're asking northerners to invest in grow bonds so you can take that money and reinvest it in northern Ontario businesses, there is a pretty small pool of capital to go after. That's the basic problem we have in northern Ontario.

I look at most of the communities where grow bonds would be where we would need money. For example, if you went to the smaller communities like Mattice, Opasatika and places like that, it would be pretty difficult to raise the kind of money you want within those communities because there isn't the money there to be able to raise it so you can lend it out.

The government, mind you, is saying that this will be a pan-northern Ontario bond, and people who live in Thunder Bay, Timmins or Sudbury can invest in those bonds and that money can be lent out. I think time will tell. Was it a great announcement? It was an announcement; let's just put it at that. I don't think, at the end of the day, that that's going to have the positive impact the changes to the criteria of the heritage fund are going to have.

We have stood in this House time and time again—myself, Howard Hampton, Shelley Martel, and Tony Martin before that—when the previous government

changed the criteria of the heritage fund from what was pure economic development, where we used to use the fund to do loan guarantees and assistance to private entrepreneurs to be able to invest in businesses in northern Ontario, to where the government said, "We will no longer do that," because the government's philosophy of the day, under the Tories, was that you should never allow businesses to borrow money from the government.

I think that's nuts. If you look at any modern European or North American economy, governments have been very busy and very proactive in lending money to businesses where the private sector has not been able to do so. One only needs to take a look at Ford; look at the investment this government and previous governments, and our government, have made in Ford, GM and Chrysler over the past 15, 20 years. They're pretty humongous. I look at the investments governments have made in Algoma Steel, Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper, and the list goes on. Those have been very strategic investments for the province of Ontario in order to safeguard jobs that are currently there and to help those particular sectors expand.

If government had not been as proactive in the auto sector as it has been over the past 30 or 40 years, the auto sector would not be what it is today. Can you imagine the auto sector today if the government had taken this position, both federally and provincially: "We're not going to get involved. We're not going to lend any money to these corporations. We're not going to provide them with the type of support they need to be able to be competitive"? The auto sector as we know it today wouldn't be happening.

That's why I'm saying to the government—not contained in this bill but somewhat related; the government announced on Friday that they are going to move to change the criteria of the northern Ontario heritage fund—here today as a New Democrat that we support that, we think that's a step in the right direction and we applaud it, quite frankly. However, it had better be a complete return to the criteria. I don't want to see that we in northern Ontario, those businesses out there looking for guarantees on loans, have to compete with money going off to municipal infrastructure. Municipal infrastructure should be funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and all those other ministries that are better suited, in my view, to deal with that. The heritage fund, the full \$60 million, should be used for economic development.

I know, as the members from northern Ontario know—my good friends from Algoma and Thunder Bay-Atikokan, I think it is, right?

Mr Gravelle: Superior North.

Mr Bisson: Superior North; I'm sorry.

We all understand quite well that there is a lot of economic opportunity in northern Ontario. The difficulty is in trying to get the banks to lend you the money. How many entrepreneurs have we dealt with who are trying to get businesses off the ground, and how many businesses

are currently running that are trying to do expansions or renovations to their plants, and when they go to the bank, are not able to borrow the money? Banks have become very restrictive when it comes to lending money in northern Ontario.

If the government is going to take the full \$60 million and say, "This is for loan guarantees; we're going to take that money in order to provide for loan guarantees and what we used to do before," I think that is a step in the right direction. I want to tell you that if you do that, you'll have the support of our caucus.

I want to come back very quickly to the other initiative that was announced on Friday, which I thought was much ado about nothing. It's not that it's a bad thing; I forget what you call it. It's the initiative to support tourism.

Mr Gravelle: Go North.

Mr Bisson: They have a Go North program. I think it's \$18 million—I'm just looking a nod. Anyway, on Friday the government announced, through the Premier, that they've got this Go North initiative. They're going to make \$18 million available to tourist outfitters and different people in the tourism industry to market their tourist destinations across North America and around the world. Is that a bad thing? Of course not. But is that something new? No. We've been doing that for years. For the government to say, all of a sudden, "We've come up with a bright idea, and we're revamping how business is done in northern Ontario," I think, is a bit beyond the pale. Is it a bad thing? No. But every government has done that in the past. I was a member of the NDP government that had similar programs. Even the Conservatives had programs to assist northern businesses to attract tourism opportunities and tourists into their part of northern Ontario. Again, is it bad? The answer is no. But it's a little bit of much ado about nothing.

If there was one piece of news that came out on Friday that has the potential for being something very positive, it is the announcement about the heritage fund. I repeat: If the full \$60 million is put into economic development, you will have our support and not a question about it. We think that needs to be done. If you start to weasel and start saying, "Well, we're only going to use \$10 million or \$20 million for economic development and the other \$40 million or \$50 million is going to be used for municipal infrastructure," the answer is no. We need real help in northern Ontario. The real help we can give is through the heritage fund, and I look forward to the government moving forward on that.

With the couple of minutes I have left, I want to say that I had the opportunity again this weekend, as we all

do, to travel across my riding. For some of us, it's a little bit more arduous than others. I probably did about 2,000 kilometres this weekend, driving to Hearst, Kapuskasing and Mattice. I just want to say that there is a real expectation on the part of northerners. They really do want to engage with the provincial and federal governments to become real partners in how we're able to grow the economy of northern Ontario. We're looking for this government to get beyond the platitudes of making announcements and sitting down with us and doing the work that needs to be done.

There are real opportunities in mining. In fact, Charlie Angus, my federal counterpart, and I met last Monday with Kirkland Lake Gold. A mine they said would never reopen, the former Macassa mine, now has about 500 people working there between both the underground and the surface operations. Do you know what their problem is? They can't find qualified miners. We haven't seen that in northern Ontario in last 10 or 12 years. Right now, if they could hire 60 qualified miners, they could take them tomorrow. We met with both Collège Boréal, the northern college, and Kirkland Lake Gold, last Monday, to talk about how we develop some training initiatives that are able to support the mining industry to help do some of the pre-qualification work that needs to be done to get people into mining.

Talking to people up at Dumas Construction, J.S. Redpath, Cementation and a whole bunch of others, it's the same story in mining across northern Ontario: There is a real lack of qualified miners and qualified people to work in the mines, and there is a real shortage of skilled trades and skilled labour. If we're going to do something to assist northern Ontario, the government has also got to respond with us at the community college level on how we are able to develop programs to assist industry to do the type of training we've got to do to support needs within industry. Industry can't do it on its own. We all know it's a pretty competitive environment out there, both in forestry and in mining. We need to make sure the government is at the table working with us in order to move on some of those very important training issue.

I look forward to working on these issues with the government and others, and I hope this government is going to do more than just talk and actually take some action on some of the things we're talking about.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, or in very close proximity thereto, this House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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**Assemblée législative
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Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 6 December 2004

Lundi 6 décembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
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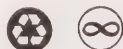
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 décembre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 135, An Act to establish a greenbelt area and to make consequential amendments to the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 and the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994, when Bill 135 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on social policy; and

That the standing committee on social policy shall be authorized to meet on Thursday, December 9, and Monday, December 13, 2004, from 10 am to 12 noon and following routine proceedings for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and that the committee be further authorized to meet on Tuesday, December 14, 2004, from 10 am to 12 noon and following routine proceedings for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 9 am on December 14. No later than 5 pm on December 14, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put, and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than December 15, 2004. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on social policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That at 5:50 pm or 9:20 pm, as the case may be, on the day that the order for third reading of the bill is called as the first government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Mr Kennedy has moved government order of motion number 292. Do you have some comments, Minister of Education?

Hon Mr Kennedy: Only to say that this is a necessary adjustment to this particular bill that we are putting forward. It will allow for hearings, it will allow for debate, but it will do that in the manner described.

The Acting Speaker: Debate on the motion?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I do this standing on one leg now.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): How about sitting down?

Mr Bisson: I know I should, I'll tell you. I'm just doing this on one leg today. That is sore.

I just want to put a couple of things on the record in regard to this particular time allocation motion. It's interesting that the government has to—if you wouldn't mind, Mr Speaker, I really do need to sit down. Can I just talk later? Oh, my foot.

1850

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for the member to make the address seated.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent to allow the member for Timmins-James Bay to make his presentation from his seat? Agreed. We're making history tonight, I think. The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: Thank you. Just for people back home watching, if you're wondering, I've got a really bad foot. I think I broke it and I'm sitting here waiting to go for X-rays, so I'll do this sitting down. I have to say, this is the strangest speech I've ever given in this House. I've never done it sitting down before.

I just want to put a couple of things on the record. This is a time allocation motion. I think it's important to note, in the spirit of co-operation, that there is some discussion going on among the three parties about trying to work out some sort of arrangement when it comes to public hearings on this bill. We know that there are a number of people, especially those people contained within the greenbelt, who, even though they support this particular bill, have some issues that they want to be able to raise at committee in order to make sure that whatever we do with the bill, we do it right.

I want to say that I, myself, have no problem with the direction that the government is taking in regard to the greenbelt legislation itself. I do think there are some problem areas around aggregate. For example, last week our critic for environment, Marilyn Churley, raised a number of issues in regard to how, the way the legislation is drafted and the way the aggregate act is drafted, the greenbelt in fact is going to probably allow, and continue to allow, the development of quarries in the greenbelt area. That is an issue that we need to clarify: Is it or isn't it? And if it is, we need to have some form of amendment to be able to deal with that.

There are a whole bunch of other issues in regard to the legislation that I think are important from the perspective of committee hearings. It's always a good thing, I would say—and I think my good friend Mr Dunlop, the Tory whip, will agree with me that it's not a bad thing—when we get bills out to committee and we get the opportunity for the public to be able to—

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I love it.

Mr Bisson: As whips, we love it for a different reason. We have to find people to staff these committees.

Mr Dunlop: It's tough getting people to committee in January.

Mr Bisson: That's another story. It's going to be fun to see what you guys have to do.

It's not a bad thing, I think, for the government to allow this type of legislation into committee, even though this bill got out to committee at first reading. There were, first of all, some consultations before the bill was ever drafted. There were some committee hearings that were given just after first reading, which I think was a good step on the part of the government. But it's clear there's still some point of contention, and I think it's important that the government allow this bill to go off to committee in January for a bit in order to make sure the public, the municipalities and the developers have an opportunity to come before the committee to raise their particular points, to make sure we're able to deal with the concerns that they have.

I know that my good friend the member for Niagara Centre, Mr Kormos, has some pretty specific concerns as well. He has talked to me about some of the concerns that people in his part of southwestern Ontario have when it comes to the bill. I'm sure people from the area of Welland and others are going to have an opportunity to speak at committee on that.

But let's keep in mind that we are in time allocation. It's kind of an odd time allocation motion, because we're debating a time allocation motion that may not be necessary, depending on what the government does. The opposition has taken the position that it wants this bill to go out to committee. Originally, the government said no, they weren't going to allow it to go to committee. The opposition said, "Listen, there's a price to pay for that. If you want other legislation, it might be more difficult for you to get that done if you do not allow this bill to go to committee." So there is ongoing discussion. I think most members know that this is happening, in order to see if we can get to some sort of agreement when it comes to dealing with committee hearings.

I also want to put on the record—because it is time allocation—that there's an additional issue for us, that we want the government to deal with as part of the ongoing discussions that we have right now. That is, there's going to be another time allocation motion coming to this House around Bill 106. If you remember, Bill 106 is the time allocation motion that allows the government to pass its tax measure when it comes to the health tax, and also to make amendments to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. I would just say—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Did you get unanimous consent?

Mr Bisson: Yes. I got unanimous consent, John. Can you believe that? If you've got a sore foot, you can get away with almost anything.

I would just say that there's another time allocation motion that's coming before the House. I want to make it very clear to members—and I know that Mr Brown, my good friend from Manitoulin, is here, who's also a northerner and who, like myself and other northerners, cares deeply about what happens in our special part of the province—that contained in the next time allocation motion around Bill 106 is the issue of mills and mill closure.

I know that there are two sides to this story. The government is trying to basically say, "Don't worry. The amendment that's put forward in the bill is not going to put mills in jeopardy. It won't allow for supermills." I have a much different opinion. I want to put on the record that in conversations I've had with mill managers, with Ministry of Natural Resources staff, with people who drafted the original legislation—by the way, I was on the committee that drafted the original legislation—there was a reason we put that section in the bill.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I was there too.

Mr Bisson: Yes, you were there, along with Mr Hodgson, Mr Wood, myself, and I forget who else was there.

I want to be clear about what the bill actually did. Back in the early 1990s, it was pretty clear that there were going to be some substantive changes happening in the forestry sections. Most members will recognize that most of the sawmills were independently owned. Up in my part of the province there were companies like—

Interruption.

Mr Bisson: Oh, Lord. That thing never does that. Let me just turn that off. Here we go. I've got to say that only my daughter and my wife have that number. They do it to me every time. I don't know why they do this to me. Turn on the television when you're calling dad, for God's sake. That's all you've got to do. You'll see where I am. That's the second time that has happened. How embarrassing can that be?

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): They saw you seated.

Mr Bisson: They saw me seated. They thought I wasn't talking.

Mr Dunlop: You can have your sandwich now.

Mr Bisson: I can have my sandwich, my glass of—

I want to put some clarification on the Bill 106 amendment of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act.

Back in the early 1990s it was pretty clear that there were going to be some substantive changes in the lumber industry. Most sawmills were independently owned. In fact, if you look at places like Constance Lake, Lecours Lumber, Hearst was Monsieur Fontaine, who was the member from Cochrane North at the time, if you take a look at Levesque Plywood, the Isabelle Bros, the Malette family—the list goes on—most of the sawmills were independently owned. There might have been a group of one or two mills owned by a family, and by and large they were pretty well stand-alone operations. Back in the regime of the day, you used to have what were called forest management agreements, FMAs. What would happen was that a company basically needed wood to be able to operate, and they would get an FMA from the Ministry of Natural Resources and tie this to their ability to produce.

What we worried about when we were in government—and Howard Hampton was the Minister of Natural Resources at the time. He was the drafter of the bill, so we obviously know what we'd put inside the legislation. We wanted to put in a stipulation that if large multi-nationals or national companies bought sawmills in northern Ontario and started to control more and more of the wood there, then we had to have some mechanism so that the trees that were in the forest were tied to the community. We were very much worried that if one company, ABC forestry, came in and bought let's say mills from Kirkland Lake up to Hearst, they'd be in a position to say, "We own all of these mills. We're going to shut down the smaller ones, the less productive and profitable ones, and operate fewer mills with larger production, what we call supermills."

So we put two things in the legislation. First of all we made the forest sustainability licence a requirement; we created what were called FSLs, forest sustainability licences. As part of the regulation under FSLs, we said that the trees in the forests were tied to the community, and we put that in the regulation.

Mr Brown: It doesn't say that.

Mr Bisson: It does say that. I drafted the legislation, so I know what I'm talking about.

On the FSL side, we had put in a regulation that basically said that when you do your forest management plans, you have to have socio-economic consideration for the community where the forest is in order to make your decision about what happens to those trees and where they're going to be processed and cut into dimensional lumber or pulped into wood.

The other thing we did was that we made a requirement on the licence for the mill that the only way a mill could have an operating licence was to tie the forest sustainability licence to the actual mill. The reason we did that was that if the trees that are in the forest are basically there, and under the forest sustainability licence there is in the forest management plan a stipulation that you have to take the socio-economic impact on the community in consideration when it comes to the disposition of the wood, should the minister have to decide that, we also said we're going to make sure the only way that a mill is able to keep its licence is to tie the forest to the mill.

1900

We did that for a very simple reason. We were worried that one company would come by, buy up a number of mills and, at the end of the day, you would end up with a corporate decision, saying, "Rather than operate eight mills, we're going to operate five or six, and we're going to have fewer supermills to boost production and maximize return on investment." We said, "We have to be conscious of the fact that those trees are there for the communities."

My good friend Mr Brown knows, because he has communities like I have in my riding, where, my Lord, if, let's say, some of those mills were to be shut down so that trees could be shipped somewhere else, we would have a whole bunch of small communities in northern Ontario without their major employer. For example, take a look at the Tembec group, which is not so much in Mr Brown's riding but more in my riding and Mr Ramsay's. The sawmills from Kirkland Lake, Timmins, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Opasatika and Hearst are all part of the Tembec chain. We already know. I talked to Frank Dottori, CEO of the company, on Thursday or Friday of last week. We were at the airport. He was pretty clear. He said, "Listen, Gilles. I'm working toward eliminating a number of mills in northern Ontario to maximize production." I said to him, "You know I'm fighting you on that and I don't want to see Bill 106 passed as it is, because I think it gives you greater latitude to shut those mills down without consequence of what happens to the wood." He just shook his head and said, "Yeah, I've got to do what I've got to do, and you've got to do what you've got to do," and we parted ways.

What's clear to me is, if we allow that amendment to go through, it'll make it much easier for companies to say they're going to shut down mill X, let's say, in Kirkland Lake and take the wood from the Kirkland Lake mill and ship it to either Timmins or Cochrane. Why do I know that? Because this has already happened. In Kirkland Lake, about two years ago, Tembec had made the

corporate decision to shut down that mill, and the only reason they were not allowed to shut it down is that I had a meeting with then Minister of Natural Resources, Jerry Ouellette, and pointed out to him the clause in the legislation that basically says the forest sustainability licence is tied to the socio-economic impact on the community, and that the licence is tied to the mill. We then had a meeting in my office, along with people from the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the ministry had to reverse itself and stop the order to allow Tembec to ship the wood on a permanent basis to Cochrane and Timmins.

The law was quite clear that they couldn't do that because the effect would have been that if Tembec had said, "We're closing down the mill in Kirkland Lake," the Minister of Natural Resources would then have had to take the wood back to the crown and decide who gets it. If some other entrepreneur had wanted to operate a mill in Kirkland Lake, he would have been hard-pressed, as the minister, not to give the wood to whatever operator wanted to operate a mill in the area. As a result, Tembec didn't want to lose the wood and they reopened the mill.

So I'm saying to the government, it's a bad move. We don't need to be doing this. The government argues on their side, "Well, don't worry. This has nothing to do with that. We disagree with your interpretation." The government argues that this has everything to do with the Americans' threat of countervail duty after this latest round. I say it's pretty clear what the Americans want. The Americans want to open the Canadian wood system to an open, competitive bid system. What this amendment would do, according to the minister, is placate the Americans into seeing us move our forest system closer to what they want. If that's why you're doing it, I think it's even more wrong.

The last point I want to make is that this is not something that's gone without attempt in Canada. About two years ago, the British Columbia government did pretty well what's being done here. It's not the same regime; they don't have the same legislation as us, but they uncoupled the trees from the mills. There have been massive job losses in British Columbia. We now have round wood going into Washington state that is being cut into dimensional lumber in Washington state. A number of mills have closed down.

In talking to people in industry in British Columbia, along with the workers' representatives, who are now the Steelworkers, and Norm Rivard, president of the union, who actually comes from Kapuskasing and is the old IWA president, they're all agreeing. They're saying, "Listen, we've seen this in British Columbia and we've seen what happens."

So I say to the members of the House, there's another issue that we need to deal with. We take the position, as New Democrats, that Bill 106 has to be amended by withdrawing that particular section of the bill that deals with this forest sustainability act. If the government does that, we would obviously be more amenable to whatever else goes on in this House.

With that, I'm sitting down. I now officially sit down.

The Acting Speaker: I wasn't aware you were finished, but thank you for informing me. Further debate?

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise tonight to speak on this—I guess we'd call it a time allocation motion, although the Minister of Education referred to it as a necessary adjustment motion. I noticed how he avoided "time allocation" in his comments, so we're speaking about the necessary adjustment.

I'm glad to see the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here. It's his bill and it's his pride and joy, although we think this particular piece of legislation is flawed in a number of areas. In fact, we can't believe that at this point they want to pass this bill before the session ends, which is what the motion actually said. For our party, there's a lot of things in the bill we certainly agree with; however, there are things in the bill that we disagree with as well.

There's a lot of the key stakeholders—for example, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture put out a press release last week, and they certainly aren't pleased with the fact that you want to push this piece of legislation through. So what we're asking for—and there's a lot of negotiation going on here this evening with our House leaders. Obviously, there are a number of bills that you, as a government, want passed, and we're willing to concede debate time on a lot of those. We're prepared to move forward with those bills to committees, and those are things like the pit bull legislation, the greenbelt, the ministers' attendance legislation, the bring-your-own-wine legislation. These are all bills that we know the government wants to proclaim fairly quickly. From our perspective, we haven't got a lot of problems with some of those bills and we're prepared to move forward with them as well, to at least the next stage.

But I guess what is interesting is that we come here and, every time the previous government introduced time allocation, or I guess we could call it necessary adjustment motions—maybe as part of the democratic renewal process you could change the words "time allocation" to "necessary adjustment." That sounds like more of a Dalton McGuinty type of spin, so I think that may be something.

But I wanted to put on the record tonight a lot of comments made by the previous official opposition party, which was led by Dalton McGuinty at the time, and how opposed they were to time allocation or necessary adjustment motions. It's absolutely phenomenal, because now we're seeing a regular trend with this government. This is the second time in this session. Obviously, you're going to want to do 149. Some 14 months and you're pushing them through, because, remember, we had a programming motion for the first two sessions. So this is your third time allocation or necessary adjustment motion, and we're going to see a lot more of them.

You know, we have tactics with which we can delay legislation and all that, the same as what you folks did, but this is a very important bill, just as Bill 149 is a very important bill, in our opinion. When we see tax increases

and property rights destroyed, we have a real problem with that. We're not going to rubber-stamp anything like that, and we think that the public wants to see committee hearings on this as well—massive committee hearings.

I know that the minister has been doing some roundtables, and I commend him for doing that. I think any time you have open houses, public forums etc, whatever you want to call it—I think it's extremely necessary for the public to have that input, but this is just too fast. What we've seen here today is just too quick. It's a bill that was introduced just this fall. We need to make sure that we move ahead, but not at the pace we're going, where we'll see a motion.

I'm assuming the time allocation motion will pass tonight, but I understand there might even be an adjustment if the House leaders come to some kind of agreement on committee hearings over the course of the winter. We'll have to see what happens throughout the rest of the evening and throughout tomorrow as well. After today, I believe we only have seven days left in the Legislature before the House adjourns until some time around Valentine's Day. I think everybody wants to come back on Valentine's Day.

1910

I want to put on the record some of the comments made by the previous government as we discuss necessary adjournment motions. Let's start with a few of them.

From your leader, December 19, 2000: "For a government that promised to be open, this closure action is the height of arrogance, the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and you said you were for." That was Dalton McGuinty on December 19, 2000.

On the same day, Mr McGuinty went on to say, "I don't care what you people have to say when it comes to this matter. I've got all the answers. I run the government. I run the show."

Interjection: That's Mike Harris.

Mr Dunlop: December 19, that was Dalton McGuinty again.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: That's my quote.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Ottawa South.

Mr Speaker, I'm going to continue. This time we're going to talk about a comment made by the current Speaker—Dalton McGuinty's choice to be Speaker—a fellow by the name of Alvin Curling, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River. On October 31, 2001, he said:

"What we have today is a short-circuiting of the democratic process and closure, limiting people in expressing themselves in this democratic society. This government has consistently been so undemocratic in their approach. It is appalling, it is insulting, it is degrading in a society like this to muzzle those who have been elected to our Parliament to speak by not allowing them to speak. Furthermore, not only are they muzzling elected individuals, but also the citizens of this province, who like to express their concerns about legislation that is so important to them in every respect—to their

children, to the economy and to the institutions themselves and how they are to be governed."

Again, that was Mr Curling on October 31, 2001, referring to—what did Mr Kennedy call it?—necessary adjustment motions.

Just a little later on that year, December 10, 2002, another quote by Alvin Curling. Alvin Curling had a lot of quotes on this:

"It's rather unfortunate that an important bill like this is being allocated a limited time in which to discuss it. As a matter of fact, we're not even discussing the bill; we're going to have to discuss time allocation," which is what we're doing tonight, a necessary adjustment motion.

"There's a hypocrisy about this place sometimes about how things are being run. It's a democratic society in which we are elected by the people to bring the issues and debate the issues of the day. But then the government of the day and the rules themselves have made it impossible for us to do so."

On December 10, just two years ago, Alvin Curling said that. It's about December 10 now, isn't it? No, it's getting close.

Then, on June 13, 2002, another quote from Alvin Curling:

"One of the things we hold most precious in this democratic society is the fact that one is able to have legislation made for the people and by the people, and the only way we can do that is by proper consultation. This government does not, in any way, have any public hearings unless they're forced to."

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Speaker: This is really important. We need to recognize Jessica, the daughter of our illustrious clerk, who is here today. We need to put her on the record.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The daughter of Lisa Freedman.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome to the Ontario Legislature. It's nice to have you here.

I return to the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to welcome Jessica as well; I had no idea. It's good to see her here.

I'll continue with my Alvin Curling comments: "This government does not, in any way, have any public hearings unless they're forced to. Not even adequate debate within the House is being allowed." That's what we're seeing here tonight under this necessary adjustment motion.

Interjection: What's he talking about?

Mr Dunlop: I'm talking about quotes made by your party in opposition about time allocation. I would have thought you were different. Under a democratic process, under democratic renewal, I wouldn't have thought you would have time allocation. I thought you were going to have full debate, send it out to committee after committee, through communities throughout our province, not squeeze it into two days before December 15.

Shall we go on with Alvin Curling? "I was appalled again today that the government House leader stood up to say that there would be a restriction, a closure and limited

time in which one would be able to debate this very important piece of legislation." Alvin Curling, June 13, 2002.

Another quote, this time by—guess who?—Mr Duncan, the government House leader, the member from Windsor-St Clair, on November 25, 2002—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Give us a real quote.

Mr Dunlop: We're going to get around to some Jeff Leal quotes in a minute.

"We're talking about time allocation, and in this motion they will not allow committee hearings, they won't allow third reading debate—crazy.

"That's why this institution is in such disrepute, because we don't want to talk about the important things."

I could go on and on here, and I'm going to go on and on. We go on to Dwight Duncan again—I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs is peering at me over there—on November 21, 2002, just two years ago now:

"On the serious matter before us, time allocation is used yet again by a government that has not been able to manage its meagre legislative agenda, on a substantive issue that ought to have the benefit of hearings so that experts on both sides can be called, so that members can have an informed debate on the specifics contained in the bill. That's sad. That's wrong."

Dwight Duncan, November 21, 2002, talking again about necessary adjustment motions, or time allocation, as it was referred to at that point.

I've got lots of other ones. I'm only going to talk for another couple of minutes, because I know a couple of other colleagues want to make a few comments tonight as well. But I have to add a few things here. Dwight Duncan, October 26, 1998:

"Closure motions really are inherently bad for our parliamentary system and prevent members of all political parties—government members, opposition members, third party members—from fully participating in the debates of the day. They're designed to limit those discussions."

Another one from Dwight Duncan on April 27, 2000:

"If you're truly interested in democracy, as you say you are, if that is where you're going, I suggest to you that you won't use the great mallet of closure to stifle this Legislature and to prevent public input into this bill. If you're all about democracy, you ought not to be afraid of that."

We're talking about stifling legislation and stifling debate. Again, that was by Mr Dwight Duncan, the current government House leader, who is trying to force this through tonight.

Then we go to our friendly old colleague from St Catharines, Mr Jim Bradley, on December 11, 2001:

"This is indeed an interesting bill, but what's even more interesting right now is the time allocation motion that faces us. For the people who are watching this perhaps on their television sets at home, I should clarify that. That is the choking off of debate, the ending of debate or the government allocating how much time there shall be for the debate on a piece of legislation."

I could go on and on about the government members' comments and quotes on time allocation.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): What about the rest of us? We spoke up too.

Mr Dunlop: I could go through that, but I really wanted to get Bradley and Duncan in there; they were important. Bruce Crozier is not in the House tonight—

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: Oops. OK, there's Bruce Crozier coming.

Here's one; this will be very interesting, because the Minister of Municipal Affairs will know this gentleman very well. November 19, 2002, the member for Kingston and the Islands, John Gerretsen—

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Don't you dare.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, I have to put this in. The man bringing in this motion on necessary adjustment:

"So we know, first of all, why it's going to committee: to basically correct the government's own errors in the bill. We also know why they only allow about two hours of discussion there for the amendments to be moved and why they don't want any debate on third reading: because this government no longer believes in what I regard as the democratic process, and that is for a bill to be discussed as fully and completely as possible."

Again, that's by the current Minister of Municipal Affairs, the honourable John Gerretsen. There are a number of John Gerretsen quotes in here, but I don't want to bother the minister on that. I know he wants to get up and explain his reasons for this bill.

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I think what's important for our party—I don't know how the NDP will look at this—is we consider this a very important piece of legislation. It's probably one of the most important bills that we will pass in this House in the 38th Parliament, so I believe that it needs a lot of attention, a lot of committee hearings. We're prepared to allow some of the other bills to pass fairly easily before December 16 so that we can have some time in committee on this particular bill. We think it's that important to the citizens of Ontario, not just those affected by the greenbelt and the areas you've outlined, but those areas that I've brought up a number of times in this House, areas like the county of Simcoe and around the county of Peterborough, where we're going to see huge, leapfrogging growth as a result of this legislation.

I know I've made those comments about infrastructure, health care, education etc and all the additional costs that will be required by those areas as a result of any kind of leapfrogging that takes place. It's something we really want to get our head around; maybe there's a simple answer to it all. But we think there are a number of areas the government has to look at with this. That's why, although we're doing the time allocation tonight, we are hoping we can get a reversal of this even yet so that we can carry on and actually see committee hearings in January and February.

With that, I thank you for the opportunity tonight. I'm pleased to stand here on behalf of our party and make a few comments on this necessary adjustment motion. I'll be pleased to sit down now and allow the next party to take its turn.

Mr Marchese: I want to welcome citizens watching this program. We are on live. Don't shut off your power. It's 7:22 on Monday night. We're still here.

I was reminded by the member for Kitchener Centre that the Speaker is downstairs lighting the candles. He was saying that everybody is happy, everybody feels good, and why can't we spread that love around a little bit? Other speakers were there. There's probably some choir, I suspect, singing. They're having some punch—no alcohol—and some cookies. God bless. Everything just perfect, just the kind of setting to have fun.

But here we are debating a strangulation motion, a motion that Liberals, when they were on that side, would attack the Tories on, and they wouldn't relent, like the good bulldogs that we are in opposition. Then they come into government, and they do the same. Nothing changes under this beautiful sunflower of ours. You're in opposition, you attack. You get there and you say, "You're so negative on the other side." Then the Liberals will lose the next election, they'll come here and they'll attack like they used to. Then the government will get there and they'll do things differently. It's just pitiful, really, to see. It's just a sad thing to see.

I am against time allocation motions. I always have been. Our government decided to change the rules. Because Tories and Liberals hated the fact that we were in government and we couldn't do anything, some of our members felt we needed to change the rules because, without changing the rules, we just couldn't get ahead. They felt that these people, Liberals and Tories, hated us so much, we'd just have to override that hatred by changing the rules.

Mr Leal: You did that. You brought in closure.

Mr Marchese: I wasn't pleased with that. I wasn't one of the members who was happy to change the rules. Then the Tories get in, and they do the same; they change more rules. The Liberals are probably contemplating, "Let's change the rules again," assuming they could get away with it. God help us, I hope they won't do it and hurt themselves, both being in government and when they get to opposition. Because, as God surely knows if he's up there, you guys are going to lose. If it's not the next election, it will come. It will, and then you'll have to face your own judgments, your own rule changes and so on. You know what I'm saying.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: What's going to happen to you?

Mr Marchese: So when you strangulate debate, I say to you, Minister from Kingston and the Islands, it doesn't feel good. You pretend that you don't like it either, but I know you do, because you need to get on with it because you're in government. And God knows that this Bill 135 is the best thing since white bread, and God knows how much we all love white bread, and refined at that. I know you want to speed through this as quickly as you can

because you think you've got a good thing here. I'm not so sure. I really am not so sure.

And I'm not the critic for the environment; my colleague is. I don't want to speak for her, I've got to say that, but I am generally supportive of this bill. The member from Toronto Danforth, the critic, is generally supportive of this bill. I suspect, and I can't speak for everyone, the caucus is generally supportive of the bill. But I have some concerns.

You might say it's typical of opposition parties—

Mr Leal: It's Christmas. Get on board with the positive stuff.

Mr Marchese: Well, Christmas isn't a sufficient reason for us to simply, you know, shut our eyes, right? Just can't do that.

Mr Levac: How about New Year's?

Mr Marchese: New Year's is even worse.

I want to speak to the bill and read from the bill as a way of alerting those citizens who are watching, consumers and citizens alike, to why it is that some of us have some worries about it.

Because this bill is enabling—the minister nods in approval; he knows what I'm talking about. It allows for certain things. The language around the bill speaks to "may," and I will refer to the "may" word, because it's a recurrent word.

The Speaker is not nodding at this moment, because he's a bit nervous and worried, possibly. I don't know. But it does centralize power in his little or big hands. I don't think that's good. Centralizing power in his hands and/or cabinet's to set the rules completely by regulation is not a very positive thing.

And while a lot of people, environmentalists and others, might consider this bill to be really, really bold, I want to put on the record what I think about this bold step. Here is what it says, page 2 of the bill, the Greenbelt Act:

"Designation of area

"2(1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may by regulation,

"(a) designate an area of land as the greenbelt area; and

"(b) amend a designation made under clause (a)."

Minister, are you following this?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I am.

Mr Marchese: The Minister of Citizenship is, because I can tell.

It says "may by regulation designate an area of land." It doesn't tell us—environmentalists, the general public, farmers, anybody concerned—what we are designating. There is no established greenbelt area. I don't know what the area is; environmentalists don't know—they hope they know; farmers don't know; the general public doesn't—

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Look at the map, Rosie.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: A lot of Liberals behind me say, "Look at the map, look at the map."

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Polkaroo.

Mr Marchese: Well, Polkaroo might know, but I don't.

Those of you who are saying behind me saying, "Look at the map, look at the map," should read the bill, which says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may by regulation designate an area of land as the greenbelt area." It doesn't say what it is, John.

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Mr Wilkinson: Look at the maps.

Mr Marchese: "Look at the maps." I know all of you folks are Polkaroo lovers, and I know that Polkaroo might be peeking in here and there trying to find out where it is on the map, but I don't see it.

Mr Leal: Rosario, if you phone MNR in Peterborough, they'll give you a full-page map.

Mr Marchese: And there's my buddy from Peterborough saying that if you look somewhere, you'll find it on some map.

Mr Leal: It's free. Phone MNR in Peterborough.

Mr Marchese: Phone MNR Peterborough and it'll be on the map—free. I hope Polkaroo finds it.

It says, "The greenbelt area shall include the areas covered by the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan," but remember the first clause that says, "may," Johnny. "May," it says. It doesn't say "a prescribed area." The minister John Gerretsen says "may." We are leaving it to his good graces to determine whether the area that all of you seem to be familiar with is the area we're speaking about. Do we trust John? I don't trust John.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: This John trusts the other John, but I don't trust John. And my friend John here—Perth-Middlesex, for your purposes, Speaker.

Let me go on, member from Peterborough; let me read on, for your benefit. Establishment of area: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may establish the greenbelt plan for all or part of the Greenbelt Area." John, the member from Perth-Middlesex, thinks he knows where it is, but this clause says that John Gerretsen, the minister, "may establish the greenbelt plan for all or part of"—all or part of. We don't know what that is.

Mr Leal: Do you want me to send you the map for Christmas?

Mr Marchese: The member for Peterborough seems convinced that he knows what he's talking about. I'm reading him the act and he says, "Do you want me to show you the map?"

Mr Leal: MNR will give you the map and they'll show it to you.

Mr Marchese: My good buddy Jeff from Peterborough, I'm reading you the act. I'm not just—I don't know what else I can do. David, I say to Jeff, "I'm reading the act," and he says, "I'll show you the map."

The minister, at the moment, is not nodding, which means that we've got a problemo here. He and I are disagreeing on this, or he wants to be silent. And silence

is an indication that Marchese is right, that we are on the right track, and he can't say yea or nay because he doesn't want to give his ball plan up in some way that could be confusing to some.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: OK, Jeff.

What else does it say? On page 3:

"Content of plan"

"The greenbelt plan may set out policies with respect to the lands to which the greenbelt plan applies, including,

"(a) land use designations;

"(b) policies to support co-ordination of planning and development programs of the various ministries...;

"(c) policies to support co-ordination of planning and development among municipalities; and

"(d) policies with respect to transitional matters that may arise in the implementation of the greenbelt plan."

Now, Minister, I've been around here for a while, a little bit longer than you, and a whole lot of people are just willing and happy to believe what you're saying, whatever it is that you're saying. But when I read the act, and the act says, "The greenbelt plan may set out policies with respect to the lands to which the greenbelt plan applies," I say, I don't know what you're giving us. John, are you following me? Are we in this together?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I am.

Mr Marchese: I know the Minister of Citizenship is with me and I'm really pleased, because I like it when people are sort of intent and following the discussion. The Minister of Citizenship understands when the use of the word "may" is used versus the word "shall." "Shall" clearly prescribes, or proscribes, and "may" does nothing of the sort. "May" says maybe, maybe not. We all leave it to John the minister to decide whether "may" becomes a reality in some way, by way of a "shall," or not. It will all be in regulation, and the minister will decide in his own good time, when he has the ability to raise his feet and put them on the desk and reflect on the matter. At some point or other, he'll be able to tell us what will be in this bill. I don't feel good about that. Do you, Marie?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I trust him.

Mr Marchese: Marie, the Minister of Citizenship, feels fine. She trusts the minister. I suspect what that is all about is cabinet solidarity.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: You know what that's all about.

Mr Marchese: I do. I do know. Sadly, I'm very familiar with the issue, because when you're in cabinet, you're supposed to do all sorts of things that you hate doing. While you might disagree with the Premier or the policies of the cabinet, it's a "too bad, so sad" kind of politics; you're just stuck with supporting anything that's given to you or supported by the majority. I understand that. If I wasn't there, I wouldn't be able to appreciate what we're talking about.

Let me go on, Marie. It says on page 4:

"The greenbelt plan may set out policies with respect to the areas designated by it as protected countryside, including,

“(a) policies prohibiting any use of land or the erection, location and use of buildings or structures...;

“(b) policies restricting or regulating the use of land or the erection, location and use of buildings...;

“(c) policies relating to land and resource protection and land development; and

“(d) policies for the economic and physical development of the land including,

“(i) the management of land and water resources,

“(ii) the development of major servicing, communication and transportation systems,

“(iii) the identification of major land use areas..., and

“(iv) the development of cultural, recreational and tourism facilities; and

“(e) such other policies as may be prescribed.”

That's the extent of Bill 135, and I don't understand what is bold about this bill. What is revolutionary about this bill, except that in every section that I have read what it speaks to is that the minister may or may not do certain things?

It's not much of a bill. We're not even really debating a bill, because we don't even know the contents of the bill. That's why we oppose strangulation motions in particular, because they cut off debate. They do not allow people to adequately read bills that are put in front of them. They do not allow enough debate by the opposition parties to allow for the clarification of these issues to be put on the record. We are put in a position of the government saying, “You better support this or else.” We're often put in the position where the government says, “New Democrat or Tories are stalling, which they usually do on everything around here.” So if you disagree, they put a message out there saying, “The Tories or New Democrats are stalling the bill.” They devote a whole lot of money, time and resources to communicating with the public, or rather miscommunicating with the public, to let them know not the reality of what's being debated here but only the one-sided information this government wants you to hear.

Other concerns: the Neptis Foundation—a long article in the *Toronto Star* raised some interesting issues. I thought they were rather relevant in terms of the comments they were making, because they said 143,000 hectares have been left open for future development within the greenbelt area, an area about 75% the size of all currently developed GTA lands—too much room for continuing sprawl, enough for 60 or 70 years, according to this foundation.

Enough for 60 or 70 years. That's a whole lot of development. And if the Liberals' stated goal of increasing urban density and curbing urban sprawl and the environmental impacts that accompany it—the loss of prime farmland, increased smog, increased CO₂ emissions—is to be achieved, a principal objective of both the greenbelt plan and the Places to Grow growth plan for the Golden Horseshoe, then the amount of lands designated “future development” in the greenbelt area must be significantly reduced. That's the argument they make. It appears to make sense.

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So wouldn't we want Neptis to come in front of a committee to present its picture, its side of the argument, its expertise, put it on the table for debate so as to allow the minister the opportunity to reflect on this tremendous unilateral power he has to determine what may or may not happen around this greenbelt area? I would want to hear from the Neptis Foundation, because it appears to me they have a whole lot to say.

The advisory council is an issue. “In our view, the act must clearly state that the minister shall establish the greenbelt advisory council, and we say, further, it should be mandated to develop and submit annual reports to the House regarding the process and problems in implementing the greenbelt plan, and when the Greenbelt Act is meeting the objectives, as laid out in section 5 of the act.” So this advisory council has to be prescribed. It cannot be left to the minister to decide if and when this advisory council is set up. Again, it's left to the minister, by fiat, at some point undetermined, to decide whether or not and when, if it is to happen, this advisory council is to be established.

Why would we want to support a bill—

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'll be right back.

Mr Marchese: Marie, please, don't delay. Why would we support a bill that leaves so much undetermined, undecided, vague and left in the hands of Minister Gerretsen? Why would I do that? It would be like allowing an oil—snake—a snake oil salesman—

Mr Patten: Come on. You said a “snake.”

Mr Marchese: I didn't say the minister was; I said “It would be like....” Why would I simply accept or buy something that is being sold to me on the basis of what could be? That's why the comparison. John, you would agree with the comparison therefore.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The Greenbelt Act states that the minister may establish the greenbelt advisory council, whose membership and terms of reference are then determined—by whom?

Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): The minister.

Mr Marchese: The minister. Not this John, from Perth, but the minister. On something this critical to the long-term environmental health of the region of Ontarians, the implementation and integrity of the plan cannot be left without a mechanism beyond direct political control, which acts as a guardian for the greenbelt. We can't have the minister be the guardian of some undefined plan. We need to put into place a council that is in the act so we know who it is who's going to be there, or even if not that—because we can interview them in the government agencies committee; that's not a big deal—

Mr Yakubuski: Absolutely. We've got lots of time.

Mr Marchese: We've got time for that. But we can, in the act, say that the advisory council shall be set up. John, have you got any problems with that?

Mr Wilkinson: Are you going to repeal the greenbelt when you get into power some day—heaven forbid?

Would you do that? Are you going to get rid of the greenbelt?

Mr Marchese: Would we repeal the greenbelt? If it contained the things that we support, would we repeal it?

Mr Wilkinson: That's the question. I'm waiting for the answer.

Mr Marchese: Why would we do that?

Mr Wilkinson: Do I hear the answer?

Mr Marchese: We were the ones who invited Sewell to deal with these planning issues. We were the ones who invited Sewell and other environmentalists not just to set up this group of people who went out and did hearings, but we did something that I'm not sure your Liberals—we didn't have the full support of your Liberal caucus. In fact, I don't remember any Liberal caucus supporting the Planning Act changes that we made.

So John says, "Would you support this if you were in government, if we pass it?"

Interjection: You're probably going to repeal it.

Mr Marchese: We did it before you were there. We were preventing urban sprawl before you even got into this place. We had very little support from your Liberal caucus men and women who were here at the time. We had no support. Now you want me to support a bill that is so vague and undetermined, that is left in his hands, and say, "Trust me." Why would I do that?

John, correct me if I'm wrong. I don't want to say anything that is inopportune or inappropriate or not speaking to the bill, please. I don't want you sitting there, letting the public think that somehow I'm either misleading someone or misinterpreting, deliberately or otherwise. Please, I await the opportunity to hear you respond to the things I'm putting out here, because the public needs to know what you're thinking and what you're feeling. It can't be left to regulation down the line, to the Polkaroo demarcation line of where this greenbelt is going to be.

Mr Yakabuski: Can we not take more time and do it right before we do this—

Mr Marchese: I just think we need time to let people speak to this issue because, John, unlike the Conservative Party, we are generally supportive of this move. I suspect some of you are not generally supportive of the thrust of this bill. I don't know that, but I leave this to you to determine.

Mr Yakabuski: I don't think we should do this overnight, Rosario.

Mr Marchese: It cannot be done quickly, that's for sure.

There's another concern: the settlement areas. Five years is too long for municipalities to come into compliance, so some people are saying we should reduce that to two. Why are they saying that?

Settlement areas within the protected countryside designation of the greenbelt must bring their official plans into compliance with the greenbelt plan no later than the date respective councils are required to undertake their next official plan review.

As official plans are to be reviewed under the Planning Act every five years, those settlement areas which have recently reviewed their official plans, the town of Halton Hills, for example, will not have to comply with the greenbelt plan for another five years.

This implies that they will not have to implement the policies regarding natural heritage features on development lands until the next review of their official plan.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'm back.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Marie, for coming back. Nice to see you again.

If you passed your official plan just a couple of days, weeks ago or months ago, you're OK for another five years. You don't have to worry about enforcement or being bound by this bill that says "may or may not," whatever, blah, blah. But it's still a concern, because irrespective of what this bill says or doesn't say, it's going to be stated in regulation, and we don't have a say on those regulations. At the moment, if we leave it to five-year plans—and some councils have already passed their official plan—they will not be bound by this Greenbelt Act, however vague it is.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: That's not true.

Mr Marchese: The minister speaks softly and says it isn't true. We await the vigour of his response.

The Greenbelt Act contains no enforcement mechanisms or penalties if municipalities fail to comply within the stated five years. Why would you do that? Why would you not have enforcement plans contained in the bill so that we would know, and have the ability to speak it, where municipalities would be aware of their responsibilities and duties set in the act. But at the moment, if a municipality does not conform to this vague act, yet to be determined by regulation and the minister down the line, there is no penalty. There is absolutely no enforcement.

How do we expect municipalities to abide by any rules we want them to abide by, to respect the act, however vague, if we don't have any enforcement mechanism built in; if we don't know in advance, John from Perth, what penalties would be imposed on municipalities that don't buy in?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Yes, a big stick; of course you have to have a big stick. Why would you pass a bill and not include enforcement? I don't understand that, John from Perth.

Mr Wilkinson: The minister will tell us.

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Mr Marchese: No, I don't want the minister to tell me what may or may not be included; I want to see it in the act. Like so many other bills that we have dealt with in my history of 15 years in this place, we do include, in bills, enforcement mechanisms and penalties when people break the law. We do that, John. So would you say of other bills that you may have passed where there's enforcement that that's the big stick and you don't agree with that?

Mr Wilkinson: I'm just asking the question, are you going to go to committee?

Mr Marchese: Ah. We'll wait for John the minister to clarify the matter.

My view is, if you don't have enforcement built in, it's not going to be very helpful.

The minister must have the powers to bring the official plans of municipalities into compliance with the Greenbelt Act, if necessary. Unlike the growth plans in the complementary Places to Grow Act, 2004, the Greenbelt Act contains no provision for the minister to amend municipalities' official plans to bring them into compliance with the Greenbelt Act. That, in our view, is a serious lack of accountability in this act.

Another issue: The Tories made the viability of municipalities dependent on growth. Now the Liberals are telling small settlement areas in the greenbelt that their growth will be frozen for the next decade with no corresponding increase in the new financial measures to offset infrastructure costs. This is a serious issue. On November 15, the Liberals and feds jointly announced new funding for municipal and rural infrastructure projects, \$298 million each over the next five years, leaving the municipalities to fund one third. The program applies to centres under 250,000 in population. This funding mechanism applies to the entire province but does not directly address the specific situation of small settlement areas under the green plan.

What are the implications of that? The implications are very clear. Without increased revenues to fix infrastructure and maintain services in smaller settlement areas, property tax increases are inevitable. Increased property taxes will create hardship for residents, especially those on fixed incomes, and already struggling farmers and young families. Infrastructure funding specifically for those smaller communities, rural communities, must be made available immediately to ensure their long-term sustainability.

These little communities have no money. So this wonderful contract you signed with the feds, where these municipalities have to raise a third of this money and the smaller settlements do not have the money to be able to kick into this program—what are they going to do? They either do not buy into this program and/or increase property taxes. What an incredible burden to put on people of modest income who might have invested their whole life into a little home and are going to be expected to accept increases in their property taxes in order to be able to buy into this infrastructure program.

You've got to help, John Gerretsen. Minister, you've got to help them; otherwise, there's going to be a serious problem.

On the issue of agriculture: Protecting farmland does not protect farming or safeguard Ontario's important agricultural industry. Farmers want to farm, and we know that. But the global crash in agricultural commodity prices, combined with the ongoing effects of BSE in the North American cattle market, have many farmers on the brink of financial disaster. We are all familiar with that.

Farmers want to farm but are often forced to become speculators, because the government is not doing enough

to make farming financially viable in the greenbelt and elsewhere in the province. The farmers' concern with the greenbelt and its potential to decrease their equity and increase their taxes brings to light some of the systemic problems with agriculture in Ontario that require immediate action.

The potential for what this government is doing in terms of limiting some of the farmers who are hurting and their ability to be able to sell some land to make ends meet is real. We want to keep the small farmer farming; we do. It's part of what we value in Ontario and in Canada. But they can't do it alone. They need government support.

How do we do that? Protecting farmland is simply the first step, but farmers and farm communities in the greenbelt and in the entire province need a meaningful farm income support system. Without that, many of our farmers are going to be in trouble.

To sum up, we want hearings; we need hearings. We need hearings because a whole lot of questions are being raised by the vagueness of this bill. We want people to comment on what this minister has done by way of introduction of this bill with language that is clearly enabling and nothing else. It prescribes nothing. Every section of this bill includes the word "may." In every section of relevance, it's "may." Something may or may not happen, and it may or may not happen because of what the minister will or will not do sometime in the future because of regulation.

We're generally supportive, but we have a whole lot of questions.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Let me, first of all, say that this government does not take any pleasure in bringing in a time allocation motion. We would much prefer not to have a time allocation motion. I'll just go through some of the history as to how we got here in the first place.

I think the record will clearly show that this is, I believe, the third time we've used time allocation in 14 months in office. When we compare that to the time of the previous government, when in the last couple of years just about every bill was time-allocated on a regular basis and some after only two hours of debate, as the member from Simcoe North indicated, and we look at what has happened in our particular case here, I think we can see a dramatic difference.

At the outset, let me say that no government, particularly this government, wants to time-allocate debate on a motion. However, we also know that the current greenbelt legislation expires on December 15. A year ago, we passed an act which basically allowed for a one-year moratorium so that this area could be studied, so that the proper legislation could be introduced, so that the plan could be introduced and the mapping done during that period of time.

There has been widespread consultation. Let me just compare the consultation that we've had on this greenbelt legislation to the Oak Ridges moraine legislation that was passed three or four years ago. In the case of the Oak Ridges moraine legislation, there was a similar bill

passed which called for a moratorium on development on the moraine as we passed a year ago, and that bill then went out to a task force—or rather an advisory panel was set up. That advisory panel, dealing with the Oak Ridges moraine, held exactly four public meetings: in Uxbridge, Caledon, Vaughan and Cobourg. When it came out with its final report and made a number of recommendations as to what should be included in the Oak Ridges Moraine Act, that report was never made public.

Now, compare that to our Greenbelt Task Force, which was made up of 13 citizens of our community, of this province, having a wide variety of interests from environmental interests to development interests. They held six public meetings: in King City, Oshawa, Hamilton, Caledon, St Catharines and Burlington. After receiving some 1,200 verbal submissions and after meeting with 60 different stakeholder groups, it made a report. You may recall that that report was made public for everyone to study and see, as to the principles that were going to be used in determining what the greenbelt plan was going to look at.

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Since that time, since our greenbelt plan under the current legislation, the draft plan, was made available, and the mapping thereto, we have held eight formal public meetings: in St Catharines, Stoney Creek, Oshawa, Caledon, Toronto, Burlington, Markham and Oakville. It has been posted on the EBR for 45 days. We've received lots of submissions.

Interjection: What's the EBR? People don't know what that means.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: The Environmental Bill of Rights registry.

When we compare that to what the previous government did on the Oak Ridges moraine final bill, there were absolutely no public meetings at all; we held eight of them. It was posted on the EBR for 30 days. As a matter of fact, when the bill finally came to the House, it was time-allocated, and a committee dealt with the bill over a three-and-a-half-hour time period. Compare that to our suggestion in this time allocation motion that there be two days of hearings, both before question period in the afternoon and following question period, as well as one day of clause-by-clause.

The sole point that I'm trying to make is that, in legislation of a similar nature on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt that we're dealing with currently, we held a total of 14 public meetings, compared to four under the Conservative bill, and we're allowing for three days of debate by the committee, as opposed to three and a half hours of debate. And I think it should also be said that we've already had three days of debate on this particular bill here in the House. As members well know, the usual time that we allow for a bill to be debated in this House is three days. So it has had the usual kind of debating time that most bills get.

I cannot overestimate the notion that the previous government time-allocated just about every bill that came before the House, whether they were large, small or in

between, particularly near the end of their regime, over the last couple of years, whereas this is only the third time that we've done this. We have to do it quite simply because the current legislation sunsets on December 15 and, as we heard about earlier, it's absolutely imperative that we have this enabling legislation in place by that time.

In dealing with the comments of Mr Marchese, the member from Trinity-Spadina, he has made some good points here, some valid points; no question about it. So I say to him, allow this bill to go through to committee. Let's have that discussion, let's have the formal deputations before the committee. We're always open to having anyone try to improve this bill. But for him to somehow suggest that because the word "may" is used in the third section of the bill, which states, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may establish the greenbelt plan for all or part of the greenbelt area," that that somehow means that—is he trying to suggest that we are not going to pass or in effect implement the greenbelt plan under this bill? Some of the arguments that he made, quite frankly, were—

Mr Leal: Suspect.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: —suspect, or at least unusual. Would he really have the people of Ontario believe that we'd somehow go through debating this bill and spend all this time over the last year in consulting with the people of Ontario during the Greenbelt Task Force debates and discussions and during the current bill, and then at the end of the whole exercise we're not going to somehow approve the greenbelt plan, we're not going to implement the greenbelt plan? That's somewhat hard to believe, that we would go through this whole thing and not implement the greenbelt plan, because I've got news for them, Speaker: We are going to implement the greenbelt plan, and it is going to have precise mapping attached thereto, as to what is and isn't included. We are also going to appoint an advisory council to give advice and to review the legislation as it proceeds over time.

He made the comment with respect to where the greenbelt plan ranks in the priority of planning documents that municipalities and the province have. Let me make no doubt about the issue, which is clearly contained in section 8 of the bill. It clearly states in straightforward terms in subsection 8(1), "Despite any other act, the greenbelt plan prevails in case of a conflict between the greenbelt plan and (a) an official plan; (b) a zoning bylaw; or (c) a policy statement issued under section 3 of the Planning Act," which is the provincial policy statement.

So let there be absolutely no question about it that once the greenbelt plan is in effect, it will supersede the official plan of a municipality, its zoning bylaws and the provincial policy statement as well. So for him to somehow suggest that there's something underhanded that's going on by not making it a requirement for municipalities to adopt this greenbelt plan in their official plan—first of all, it's not required. The section of the act clearly states that it supersedes any official plan or

zoning bylaw, so it's not required to be immediately done. That's why, in order to be reasonable about it, we basically said to municipalities that we want to see it adopted within their official plans as well to bring some conformity, but in the meantime, the greenbelt plan will supersede any official plan or zoning bylaw that a municipality may have.

In dealing with the contents of the bill—and we've heard many, many comments—I had the opportunity myself to go to two of the public meetings that we held, both in Burlington and here in Toronto at the Ontario Science Centre. There are individuals who don't particularly care for this plan. The reason may be self-serving—not in all cases, but there may be a self-interest in some of the situations. That's for individuals themselves to decide. But I think we also heard overwhelmingly that the vast majority of individuals who do not necessarily have a self-interest in this particular area feel that this is the positive way to go. I mean, anyone who lives in and around the Toronto area, who has to either go home from work or vice versa and lives anywhere other than in the downtown area knows of the sprawl and the gridlock problems that are present here in this area on a day-to-day basis.

So what we're trying to do, in conjunction with the changes that were made to the provincial policy statement, in which we are urging municipalities to get more involved in the intensification of property development, particularly along transportation routes—the kind of greenfields development that just creates sprawl further and further out from the lakeshore is simply unacceptable in the years to come.

When you consider the fact, as everyone will agree, that over the next 25 to 30 years anywhere from an additional three to four million people will be settling in this area, it is absolutely imperative that a government—and certainly this government, by making it a platform commitment during the election last year—takes the problems that seem to be growing on a daily basis at hand and does something about them. What we've decided to do about it is to make sure that the prime agricultural lands and those environmentally sensitive lands that are in the Golden Horseshoe area, that connect in effect the Oak Ridges moraine to the Niagara Escarpment, are protected for future generations to come.

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A lot of people have put an awful lot of time and effort into it: the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Agriculture, many of the planners in the area who work for various regional and local municipalities. We've consulted with these people on an ongoing basis over the last year to make sure we get the final plan correct.

I know that years from now we will be able to look back on this legislation. In effect, we've added a million acres, primarily made up of agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands, to be protected for future generations, and those generations will thank us for that.

There are many examples around the world where this kind of legislation was not always popular at the time, or

had tremendous opposition at the time it was first introduced, yet once it was put into effect and people had an opportunity to look back on it later on, it became a resounding success. All one has to do is look at the Vancouver area, for example, where a greenbelt was established after a tremendous amount of controversy back in the mid-1970s. If you talk to anybody in the Vancouver area now, as I certainly have had the opportunity to do, even to some people who weren't all that much in favour of it some 30 years ago, they will now all admit it was the best thing they did. Not only was it good for the environment, but it was good for future generations. It dealt with the gridlock and sprawl problem that happens to each and every one of us who lives in the immediate Toronto area.

I urge the members of this assembly to vote for this motion so that we can get on with it, deal with some of the legitimate issues raised here today in committee and have the legislation passed by December 15.

As far as the plan itself is concerned, and the mapping that's attached thereto, we intend to have that in place within 45 days from the time the bill is actually passed, on or before December 15. So we hope to have that in place by February 1.

The reason we're taking that extra time is to make sure we've got it right. It is absolutely imperative that since we are dealing with, in many cases, lands owned by private individuals, we want to make sure we do it right. That's why all these various meetings have taken place. We're absolutely convinced that once we have taken that extra period of time and met with the various municipal and regional officials, we will get it right.

There have been many comments made that perhaps other programs should be put in place, such as in agriculture. I can certainly agree with that. We want to make sure that the agricultural community we are trying to protect within the greenbelt area is a viable industry, and viable economic plans are necessary to make sure that happens. That's one of the reasons why, in the plan itself, we have allowed for a certain amount of expansions, taking into account future methods in which agriculture, for example, can be advanced from a technological viewpoint. We realize that if we were simply to freeze the kind of agricultural practices that are in vogue or being used right now, we may in effect be harming certain ways of agricultural production etc. One way to deal with that is to allow technological advances that may occur over a period of time to be introduced into the agricultural component of the greenbelt.

There are many other issues like this that we've taken a look at to make sure we are fair to everyone concerned. For example, one of the things that hasn't always come out in the various discussions we've had is that the existing land uses that people have within the greenbelt area will be allowed to continue. Somehow individuals are under the impression that the moment the greenbelt comes into place, they can no longer carry on the kind of business activity or tourism activity they are currently carrying on. All existing land uses can continue.

So I would once again just urge the members here to vote in favour of this motion so that we can get on with it and implement the bill that I think generations in the future will thank us for.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I am pleased to offer up some concerns that are being expressed by my constituents and by the region of Halton and the city of Burlington and, in fact, all the municipalities in Halton, who have prepared a joint submission and a joint response to the greenbelt plan.

As I am accustomed to doing, I am before the House tonight to put those expressions of concern on the record and to urge the government to follow a course as recommended not only by the region of Halton, but, I must admit, a cosignatory in the form of Mayor Rob MacIsaac, who chaired the minister's task force on the greenbelt. He too signed on behalf of the city of Burlington, expressing some concerns about the government proceeding with the current legislation until such time as certain matters have been clarified.

First of all, let me deal with this whole issue of closure. This is a non-issue for me. In the five different governments I have had to sit through in my 20 years here, closure is used all the time. I am not going to read anything into the record. Every government does it. I think the only things that are helpful to the debate are the importance of the legislation and the impact on the future of the province and timing. And timing is only of major concern as it relates to whether or not there is controversy within the bill and substantive concerns being expressed.

Having said that, that is exactly why I feel compelled to bring forward the concerns expressed by Halton region and the cities of Burlington, Oakville, Halton Hills and Milton. These concerns are well documented in a rather extensive report, portions of which I will be reading into the record.

As has been stated, this report was made public on October 28. Barely one month later, we are presented with the need to have this legislation fast-tracked in order to meet a deadline which the government could, at its own discretion, extend past December 15.

There are concerns that are being expressed in a couple of areas. The minister is present tonight, and he will know that during the course of his presentation of his ministry's estimates before the estimates committee I indicated to him that the very first concern being expressed by Halton region was the lack of clarity with respect to the actual mapping boundaries. The minister made a promise and an undertaking in Hansard that he and his staff would get back not only to myself and the Halton members, but to the city of Burlington, whose mayor, Rob MacIsaac, was on the committee, was expressing a concern, wanting to know exactly where these boundaries were. There were some assumptions made by the staff, at both the city of Burlington and Halton region, as to what was inside the boundaries and what was outside, and to date those matters have not been clarified.

On the premise that the minister did promise in an undertaking in Hansard that he would get clarification and has not been able to do that, that in and of itself is cause for concern, and one wonders if that has more to do with the speed at which the bill is proceeding and to what degree matters of accuracy and detail on land use planning are of that great concern.

It's been alluded to that the minister went to two public meetings. One was November 17, in Burlington, and we thank him. Burlington doesn't get chosen very often as a location for public hearings, but we're delighted it was chosen. I think that a lot had to do with thanking Rob MacIsaac, our mayor, publicly for his work in this area.

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However, there was a considerable amount of concern expressed at that meeting, concern about—I'll categorize it very generally—the degree to which agricultural land is being treated in a land use policy without an accompanying plan to protect, encourage and support farming. Halton region has such a plan. It's a very good plan. I recommend that the Minister of Agriculture, who's here tonight in the House, consider how Halton has worked with its Ontario Federation of Agriculture members in terms of developing land use policy which will help farmers stay in farming. Halton region has expressed concern that there's a misfit in terms of sterilizing the land in some farming areas and what impact that's going to have on farms that are directly adjacent to the protected areas. I know the Minister of Agriculture is aware of that. That's a concern from Halton region and the OFA.

The second concern comes from groups like COPE—Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment. This is an organization, which I have been working with and which I support, that has expressed concern that currently—and there are two areas of concern here. One is that the greenbelt plan does not speak very clearly to whether provincial policy statements have primacy, instruments that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has that he can take to cabinet and supersede a whole series of local planning act amendments and the Planning Act itself. It can supersede the Oak Ridges moraine act. It can supersede the Greenbelt Protection Act. The Niagara Escarpment act is the fourth piece of important land use legislation that protects land that has this provincial override. So this is a very powerful instrument.

Nowhere have we as the region of Halton, nowhere have organizations like COPE, been given assurances that, for example, transportation corridors, large-scale quarries, large-scale linear—linear and non-linear are forms of infrastructure; these are non-linear infrastructure packages. There is no clear policy statement. First of all, which has primacy? Shall the greenbelt plan have primacy over these others? I'm going to read into Hansard, if I have time, the specific sections of this bill that contradict each other. In fact, in one section it clearly states that the provincial policy statement, the instrument of power wielded by cabinet and the Minister of Muni-

cial Affairs, has precedence over the Niagara Escarpment act and the Greenbelt Act and so on. My region of Halton has said that as long as these contradictions exist in this legislation, I'm not supposed to support it.

I support the principle of land use management. As someone who used to work for former Premier Bill Davis on staff, I can tell you that I was around when we brought in the Niagara Escarpment legislation. I was around when the first greenbelt planning documents were first conceived of. This was a very exciting time in urban planning in our province. It was one of my majors at university, it was an area of extreme interest to me, and I was fortunate to work for former Premier Bill Davis at a time when there was a huge renaissance in this area. So I personally support it. I worked on the Bruce Trail in my younger days; I've hiked it in my older years. I recognize fully the value here.

But there are some serious questions being raised with respect to where the mid-peninsula corridor will be located through the Niagara Escarpment. There are many of us, including myself, who believe that any transportation planning should be done with the utmost of scientific evidence and the utmost of best planning practices applied to protecting the escarpment. The greenbelt plan doesn't do that. The greenbelt plan is silent about these linear and non-linear infrastructure projects, and the minister's powerful provincial policy statement rights that he has within that. So those organizations are saying to me, as their MPP, that they're expecting me to continue to fight for what we believe in in terms of trying to preserve the escarpment and trying to find alternative routes for transportation corridors that are being considered by the mid-peninsula corridor, that in fact these protections need to be in place. Until we have those assurances, then this legislation, in my view, is being rushed, mistakes will be made, and they can't always be corrected by regulations that we will never see.

One of the individuals—many individuals, rather—expressed concern about how quarries are treated in this legislation and how various municipalities have built into their municipal planning the treatment of these facilities and potential growth. One of the persons who came forward—I'm just going to read briefly—a Burlington resident who was at the November 17 meeting in Burlington, noted that quarries affect water supplies and urged that no new applications be allowed on the escarpment. "The government is losing credibility in my eyes," said Helen Dutka, who lives on the escarpment. "It wants to protect the escarpment plan for years to come, but it's allowing the aggregate industry to continue business as usual," it went on in this article.

"The Halton region has expressed similar concerns." I'm quoting from their rather lengthy report that's contained, in part, in a letter to the minister, dated November 29, 2004—this letter is barely a week old—asking for more time to do a more thorough job with this report. The report raises some key question questions about the scale: "Under section 4.3.2, the second bullet point on page 23 of the draft plan should be modified to

read"—and this is what the Halton region recommends—"that 'Any application for the expansion or establishment of a mineral aggregate operation shall be required to demonstrate how the connectivity between key natural features will be maintained and how the water resources system, as defined under section 3.2.3, will not be adversely affected before, during and after the extraction of mineral aggregates.'" It goes on to indicate that Halton region has some very high standards in terms of the impact of aggregate extraction on the water table. And yet they do not have the kinds of protection in the greenbelt plan. So there's considerable concern being expressed by Halton region.

Halton region continues on further to say—this is a point that I just want to read into the record, that I raised for the minister. This has to do with the contradiction with the power of the minister under the provincial policy statement to override these various pieces of legislation. On page 5 of the draft greenbelt plan it says, "With respect to the PPS"—provincial policy statement—"the greenbelt plan includes policies that represent a higher or different policy standard than the PPS. Unless otherwise stated this plan"—and that means the greenbelt plan—"defers to the PPS, including the definitions in the PPS." The first sentence appears that the greenbelt plan prevails over the PPS, while the second sentence implies exactly the opposite. That's from the staff report.

So clearly we have a problem with a contradiction as to which has primacy. And the citizens of Halton and Burlington have very legitimate concerns about this government's intention to bring in a mid-peninsula corridor that paves through this significant ecosystem and this part of the Niagara Escarpment.

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The minister makes promises, and we know we have difficulty hearing promises from the government. It speaks directly to their credibility. I don't impugn their intention here. I think it is proper and appropriate to be concerned about land issues, but, frankly, he has raised more questions, as has my region, than the answers we've received. I am still waiting for those maps so that I can share them with Halton council.

I want to acknowledge my colleague from Erie-Lincoln for his leadership on this issue. I will allow him to take over the floor on my behalf.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I'm pleased to take this opportunity to speak to the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act and to encourage and urge my colleagues to give this legislation the priority it deserves and to ensure that it passes quickly.

The proposed legislation is fundamental to many aspects of life in Ontario and its future. It is pivotal to the manner in which Ontario will grow. It is necessary for strong communities that a well-planned, less-congested and curbing of sprawl exist and that we provide Ontarians with a high quality of life. It is needed to preserve and protect our environment, ensuring that our watersheds, ecosystems, resources, forests and more survive. It is critical for a healthy agricultural sector, one that will

provide us with the food we need so that, as our population grows, we have local produce and food that we can count on for our citizens.

We want to be able to support a vibrant economy, one that attracts business and investment and creates jobs, opportunities and prosperity for Ontario and Ontarians. It is vital for our enjoyment of life. If the member from Trinity-Spadina could imagine a greater Golden Horseshoe without trails or rural areas, I am sure that's something we wouldn't even think of. For all these reasons, I think it is important that we deal with this particular bill expeditiously.

We've been told that there are estimates of how fast our province will grow, particularly in the Golden Horseshoe area. We're told that by 2031 we can expect four million more people to be living in this area, bringing the population to a total of 11 million. With that will come, of course, additional jobs. It's estimated that approximately two million new jobs will come with that, and that is good for our province. We need that kind of strength and diversity in our economies. That will help our ability to prosper.

Currently, central Ontario generates nearly two thirds of the province's GDP and nearly one third of Canada's GDP. Solid growth will certainly help all of us and be of benefit to this province, but then there's another side to the problem. Without proper planning, this significant growth will overwhelm our province, eat up our land and diminish our quality of life. Our government is proposing to accommodate this growth, and that is done through greenbelt protection.

You will recall that almost one year ago Minister Gerretsen introduced the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, which was passed by the Legislature in June. This act created a greenbelt study area across the Golden Horseshoe from Niagara Falls to Rice Lake near Cobourg and north to Barrie. As you know, that includes some of the most environmentally sensitive areas, some of our best agricultural lands and also some of our most attractive landscape in the countryside.

These same lands are also under some very intense development pressures. When we talk about development pressures, we are concerned about the urban sprawl that is consuming the lands we want to keep. We want to keep agricultural and environmentally sensitive lands.

Our government resolved to study this area, and we have determined how best to protect it for future generations. The original Greenbelt Protection Act established a one-year moratorium on new urban development in rural and agricultural areas. Lands that were already zoned for development could still go ahead, but the moratorium guaranteed that we were able to hold areas until we were able to bring forward the public discussion that we wanted to have.

Minister Gerretsen established the Greenbelt Task Force, and the task force went forth and made recommendations on the scope, content and implementation of a permanent greenbelt. It developed a discussion paper and consulted widely. Within that consultation, we heard

from over 1,200 individuals, 60 stakeholder groups, and we received over 1,000 written submissions. In August, the task force presented its series of recommendations. Out of that we developed Bill 135, the proposed Greenbelt Act. We want to build on that public consultation that took place then and the public consultation that we have done since.

One of the things that I heard in particular at the public consultations was the whole issue of agriculture. Agriculture is a cornerstone of our plans for the greenbelt area. The area we are talking about holds some of the most fertile soils in the province. It is some of the most productive farmland we have. The plan would permanently protect about 100,000 acres of the Niagara Peninsula's tender fruit and grape specialty crop areas. This is the land that is so important to us in terms of our tender fruit industry, but also our wine industry, for which we are internationally recognized. All of us recognize the importance of the ice wine industry to our international markets.

The plan also protects the entire Holland Marsh specialty crop area, which is over 15,000 acres of land located in York region and Simcoe county. There are very few of us here today who haven't driven through those areas and seen that farmland and seen how beautiful it looks and how productive it is. That is just very evident as you go by.

Just this past weekend, I had an opportunity to speak to one of my constituents about the greenbelt area. He told me about how he enjoys coming into the Niagara region to tour the wineries and the vineyards. He told me that every year he comes back and there are new wineries that have been established. He enjoys sampling their wares, and he takes home with him the product he finds there. We want to keep those kinds of things. The last thing we want to do is pave all of that over. Our plan would ensure that farmers continue to farm that land and allow for a full range of normal farm practices, and we would support farm operations.

I heard the member from Trinity-Spadina speaking about the possibility of selling farmland. There is no question that this has been a particularly difficult year financially for many farmers, but that is the case right across this province. The BSE issue has added to that and compounded it greatly, and our government has addressed that by providing a safety net and aid to those farmers. But there is no question: oilseeds and grains have definitely seen a decline in price. Prices are very low.

But farming is cyclical. We have all experienced these things. I wouldn't be the first farmer who could say that I have thought of selling my farm at a time when things were particularly low and using those funds to try to deal with the economics I had to face. But on sober second thought, we all know that that is very short-sighted. We are not going to sell our farms and abandon the future. That is not what farming is about.

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We have always dwelt and lived on the hope of the next season, and I know people sometimes think that doesn't make a lot of economic sense, but it's a very real thing. I know the farmers whom I've talked to in the greenbelt consultations are dealing with those kinds of issues right now. They're dealing with the finances and the viability issues, but that is, as I said, something that we all share in this province. What they really want to do is make sure that there are farms and farmland for the future. They want to leave that legacy for the next generation of farmers. In the long term, we recognize the importance of agriculture not just for ourselves as farmers, but for the society that we try to grow the food for.

As I said, no one wants to see these lands paved over in unrelenting sprawl. Our plan would certainly ensure that farmers can continue to farm those lands. We will support farm operations, including larger agricultural operations and activities, that would provide the agricultural range that we need and also allow for secondary farm uses. We want to stop the fragmentation of farmland—this is very important—so we want to introduce strict limits to non-farm uses that would conflict and hinder farming.

One thing that we have done in this bill and in our plan is allow for the sale of surplus farm dwellings. We need to do that so that farmers can consolidate their farms. As I mentioned, we are in an agricultural environment where farmers are getting larger. So, in order to consolidate—farmers have told us they don't want to be landlords; they want to farm—the plan allows for the selling of surplus buildings, which would allow those farmers to take those dollars and reduce the cost of having to buy the farmland they need in order to continue in their production.

Bill 135, the proposed Greenbelt Act of 2004, will help us to set the right course. If passed, the act, as well as the proposed greenbelt plan, would make sure that Ontario grows and thrives, that our land, air and water will remain clean and healthy, and that it will all be accessible to our population. It would ensure our continued ability to grow the food we need and enjoy the heritage that we value. It would ensure that we build where it is best to build, preserve where it is best to preserve, and live and work well in our separate and unique communities. It would recognize the need to balance the goals of the greenbelt with the long-term infrastructure requirements of growth.

I urge our colleagues to move quickly on this bill because, if passed, the proposed act would provide for the greenbelt that would represent a pivotal commitment to the people of Ontario.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate this evening on Bill 135, Act to establish a greenbelt area and to make consequential amendments to the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, and the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994

Of course, we're discussing this bill this evening, but it's a time allocation motion to force the bill through and to really end debate on it. Certainly, we're hearing that more time needs to be spent on this bill to get it right, and I know that our party is really pushing for more time. We want to see committee hearings. We'd like to see that in January and take the time to get it right. You look at all the news clippings, and what do you see? "More Time Needed," from the Standard, St Catharines-Niagara, December 3:

"More time needed to comment on greenbelt law, region says. But regional council is calling for that to be extended by 45 days to ensure the province has all the right information, particularly when it comes to the lines drawn restricting growth in Niagara.

"It is a very tight time frame," said Grimsby Regional Councillor Debbie Zimmerman. 'I have serious concerns regarding the mapping'"—and we have serious concerns about the mapping and the science that went into where the lines are.

Questions have also been raised about irrigation ditches in Niagara-on-the-Lake being designated as fish habitats, restricting use by property owners.

"A great deal of work needs to be done regarding a number of policies in the draft plan," says Lincoln mayor, Bill Hodgson. 'We need 45 days of meaningful consultation. There has to be more consultation,' he said. 'It is critical we get all these things right before the legislation is passed. What is the great rush? Why is December 16 so critical? Why not take the time, with such an important bill, and get it right?'"

The Hamilton Spectator: "Greenbelt Moving Too Fast, Group Says.

"This whole process is being driven too fast with rigid deadlines. How can the government hope to finalize comprehensive legislation just two days after the last day for submissions?

"We need more time—at least a year—and more flexibility to address all the issues," said a spokesperson for one group.

"Other concerns and suggestions included"—and they list a whole list of them, which I won't go through because I don't have that much time.

The other evening I met with the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Farmers have great concerns about what is going to happen with their farms and the value of their farms, and whether they will be able to finance their crops after the values of their property are decreased. It's like expropriation without compensation. Ron Bonnett of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has many concerns with this and farmers have many concerns with this legislation. I think we need, for the sake of farmers, to take our time and get this legislation right. Ron Bonnett writes:

"In recent years, a trend has been developing that is causing concern for Ontario's farming community. The trend is the disconnect between legislation and policy development and the economic realities of farming....

"There are a number of examples where legislation and/or regulations have been introduced with little regard for practical implications and economic costs that impact the farming community. Recently examples include the Ontario government's greenbelt legislation...."

The legislation has to take the farmers' concerns into consideration. The last thing you want to see is useful farms going from farmland to parkland. I think we need to have public input, take the time and get it right. There's no need to rush this legislation. I know there have been some public meetings. In those public meetings there have been all kinds of people coming out and voicing concerns. Why not take the time to get the legislation right and to treat farmers properly?

Recently, we had the wine-selecting evening here at Queen's Park, a very nice evening where we get to select from Ontario wines the white and red wines that will represent the Legislature of Ontario for the year and have the logo on them. In that very nice event, the Grape King, Livia Sipos, was here, and wanted to be very polite, but also felt it very important to let people know that this legislation is causing vineyard owners great concern. They want those concerns to be addressed, and I think we should be addressing those concerns.

I am pleased to say that the wine from Livia's vineyard was selected as one of the wines for the Ontario Legislature this year. So wine from the Grape King's vineyard, the Crown Bench Estates Winery, is going to be one of the official wines of the Legislature of Ontario for the next year.

There are many other concerns which I will very briefly go through, because I know the member from Erie-Lincoln is keen to comment on this debate as well.

What happens with the leapfrog effect to communities like Barrie? What happens with the transportation corridors to the communities like Barrie and the price of housing in those communities when we bring this greenbelt into effect? There are some very serious concerns, so why time-allocate it? Why not take the time?

I'm only going to use one time allocation quote and that is one from Jim Bradley from St Catharines on December 16, 1997: "The opposition role is to help to slow the government down, and I think ultimately better legislation for all the people of this province emerges when the government is forced to take a little longer to pass that legislation." That's all we're asking for: more time. I'm in favour of protecting Ontario's farmland, but we also need to protect Ontario's farmers. So let's take the time and get this legislation right.

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Mrs Sandals: I am delighted to have this opportunity to debate our greenbelt bill tonight and to talk a bit about why we need to do time allocation, because I do think it's important that we give this bill high priority and get it passed quickly.

But first of all, I'd like to talk a bit about why the bill is very important. I was at an event Saturday night and someone came up to me and said, "I'm very supportive of what you're doing with the greenbelt legislation." As

you look over what a government can do, this may be the single most important thing a government can leave as a legacy: the protection of land for future generations.

I believe this is truly balanced legislation, when you look at what we are doing. There will be continued opportunity for growth, but we want to make sure that as we grow, even within the greenbelt, we have strong, well-planned, compact communities.

I have been driving to Toronto for years and years and years and dealing with commuting. Over the years, I have seen Toronto sprawling out and, with the traffic, it takes longer and longer to get to Toronto. When you see the stats, that's not surprising. From 1967 to 1999 the urbanized area of the GTA grew by 360% while the population less than doubled, which means we've been taking up more and more space per person as we've moved out. We've created massive urban sprawl, and of course that's precisely why the traffic is getting worse and worse.

We need to pay more attention to public transit. We need to pay more attention to compact forms of urban growth. Ontarians are clearly ready to address this. The advocacy group Environmental Defence Canada conducted a survey that said 81% of Ontario residents support the greenbelt plan. The group's executive director, Rick Smith, said, "Ontarians support the greenbelt protection approach and they want to see more of it. They're tired of sprawl, smog and gridlock, and see the greenbelt as a real chance to protect the environment and improve our quality of life." I agree with Mr Smith.

We are going to be protecting our environment. In fact, the little bit in my riding that has been designated as greenbelt has to do with environmental protection because the headwaters of the rivers that feed the Hamilton area and the Halton area rise at the south end of my riding.

Mr Leal: What about the Speed River?

Mrs Sandals: No, we're going to debate about the Speed River—it's in the Grand River—on Thursday. We have to protect it too. That's Thursday. Stay tuned. That's the next step. This is the greenbelt.

I do have a little bit of the greenbelt at the very south end of Puslinch. It has been included because it's the area of the headwaters of those rivers, and that's very important in protecting the water quality as it flows down through the river valleys into the greenbelt area included in Hamilton and Niagara.

It's very important to create a healthy agricultural community. As you look at that sprawl moving out from Toronto, which not so long ago was farmland around Brampton or Milton or Oakville, you see acre after acre of farmland being paved over. If we're going to have agricultural communities in the future, we can't continue to pave all our farmland.

In particular, there are two very special areas that the greenbelt legislation protects: the grape-growing and tender fruit areas in Niagara, which are unique to this province; and the Holland Marsh area for vegetable

growing, another unique agricultural area. These areas are protected.

It protects some of our recreational areas. When we look at the Bruce Trail and the Niagara Escarpment, it protects those recreational areas.

So we do have an act here that will allow growth, both industrial and urban, but in a more sensible form, while at the same time respecting our environment, our agriculture and our recreational areas.

The opposition asks, "What's the rush?" Well, there are a couple of things here. Before the current act that we're debating, there was a previous act, and it imposed a moratorium within the greenbelt study area. The moratorium says there could be no further changes in zoning to allow additional development. If something is already zoned for development, it can go ahead, but if it's currently zoned for farming or open space, for a non-development use, there's a moratorium on it. That moratorium expires on December 15. What does that mean? It means that if we do not pass this act before Christmas, developers can get in there and start changing exactly the land that we want to protect. We don't think that's right. We have gone through an extensive consultation to ensure that we are protecting land. Quite frankly, we don't want to blow it at the last minute for want of passing this legislation before we recess for Christmas. In terms of protecting this land, it is absolutely critical.

Have we consulted? With the original legislation that imposed the moratorium there were traveling public hearings and three days of clause-by-clause hearings by committee. Then, when we look at what has happened around the Greenbelt Protection Act, in February 2004 there was a 13-member Greenbelt Task Force assigned to look at the issues and make recommendations about a permanent greenbelt. This group developed a discussion paper, consulted widely on proposed approaches, heard from more than 1,200 individuals and 60 stakeholder groups and received more than 1,000 submissions. They presented their final recommendations in August 2004, which led to the current proposals around what the greenbelt should look like.

Since that time, there have been eight public meetings attended by over 3,500 people, with 1,100 written submissions, and more than 60,000 people have checked it out on the greenbelt Web site—which, unfortunately, apparently the member from Trinity-Spadina couldn't find because he's not quite clear on where the greenbelt is going to be. In total, we have had 14 public consultation sessions and a great deal of input on this particular piece of legislation. We have debated it at length in this Legislature, and it is now time to pass it.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise but obviously disappointed that after a mere three days of debate on the proposed Bill 135—legislation that, I remind the members of the assembly, would, under the plan, lock land into certain uses in perpetuity and give the minister extraordinary powers. It has received but three days of debate, and I would wager that barely one out of

10 members of this assembly has risen to give substantive comment on this legislation.

My first comment: Shame on you. Shame on you for bringing this forward. Shame on you for bringing this closure motion on this debate about legislation that will have far-reaching, long-term consequences.

Let me read back one of the quotes in Hansard from the minister himself on December 3, 2002: "It seems to me that this is a complete attack on the democratic principles and the parliamentary rules that have been a tradition within the Westminster model."

Minister Gerretsen, the member for Kingston and the Islands, himself said that in opposition, but now, as a minister, is ramming this legislation through the House, limiting debate and giving members, I think, barely 24 hours to review hundreds of consultation documents, hundreds of submissions on this legislation from across the province of Ontario, whether it's farmers, municipalities, environmentalists, taxpayers in general—barely 24 hours to make any kind of comment based on those submissions for amendments to the act.

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I have not received a single solid argument from any member of the government side as to why this legislation needs to be passed through three readings by December 16. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex said that it's because four million people are moving into the province of Ontario. They're not moving into the province of Ontario in the next couple of weeks. What's wrong with extending consultations on the legislation into the new year so we can hear from farmers, from taxpayers, from municipalities, from environmentalists, to make sure that you get the legislation right?

We've heard tonight, we've heard during debate on this bill that the map, the plan, even the legislation are replete with errors. We've documented, I think, some 50 to date just through media alone, let alone when the submissions come in, of how many problems there are with the map, with the plan, with the legislation.

So sure, fantastic, four million people will be moving, we hope, into the Golden Horseshoe area—what is it, 20 or 30 years down the road? Let's make sure that now, in preparation for those four million people, we get it right, that we preserve the land that should be preserved and that you set aside the land for growth that should be set aside. For those four million people coming 10 or 20 years hence, what's the difference of a few weeks to make sure we get this legislation right? Take the time. Get it right.

There is no appeal mechanism in this legislation for a particular land use. It only resides with the minister or cabinet to make an amendment to the bill and a 10-year review plan. So the decisions that we make today and that cabinet makes on the regulations will be for 10 years, if not into perpetuity. Take the time. Get it right.

We have a proud record. We support the principle of preserving green space. The Oak Ridges moraine legislation—award-winning—is recognized around the world for its approach to preserving green space and setting

aside the right area for growth and infrastructure; for the way the consultations, based on science, were brought about it. The Lands for Life initiative under Premier Mike Harris was the biggest set-aside of protected areas in the history of the province of Ontario, in the country of Canada. It was not done in a couple of weeks' time; it was done based on consultations, good science and making sure you took the time to get it right.

I was proud to be part of a government in voting for those initiatives. I was pleased to be part of the Progressive Conservative Party that brought in the Niagara Escarpment plan. That wasn't done overnight. In fact, I think the process took about 10 years before the final map was put into place. They took the time to make sure they got it right. Now, with a few exceptions, it is an admired area and admired legislation. I'm proud to be part of the Progressive Conservative Party that, through Frost and Robarts, brought in the Bruce Trail system, a treasure for the entire province, country and tourists who enjoy it because we took the time to get it right.

It's not just us who are saying that. My colleagues on the government side say they've consulted and now they've got to rush this legislation through before Christmas. But the same people they consulted with—the same municipal leaders, the same farm leaders, conservation authorities—are all saying the same thing, that it's important, for landmark decisions, to take the time to get it right—Durham region, the town of Erin, the chair of Durham region, the county of Wellington, the OFA, Vaughan, the region of Niagara, to name a few.

My colleague from Burlington talked about the concerns that Burlington has. He made comments about the rush for this legislation. The other reason, one of my colleagues, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, said, is that we need to get legislation through before Christmas is because we're on the verge of losing all the farmland. But there are no bulldozers at the gate as we speak that will make a difference between December 16 and good consultations for the new year. You know that.

Bill 135 has extensive provisions for protections that go back to December 16. When I'm in Caledon, when I'm in Niagara, the farmers at these hearings are saying one thing very consistently: "If you want to save the farm and save the farmer, take the time and get it right." I want to make sure this plan is based on science.

So this notion that on December 17 this armada of bulldozers is going to start paving over the tender fruit land and the Holland Marsh is a bunch of hooey—bull feathers. I don't know how far I can go; the table is staring at me now. This notion of all these bulldozers lined up at the gates of the farms is a bunch of nonsense, because you know as well as I know that Bill 135 has protections in it that when passed—if passed—in the New Year, will cover for that area. My other colleague I think from Guelph had said it's because Bill 27 expires on December 16. We all know the government has the option to extend that provision—I think you would find members opposite supportive of doing so—to make sure that we get the plan right, that we do so based on science.

As I said, we support the protection of green space, but we do so based on good science and a plan to make sure it works.

Another fallacy I hear from the government side is that through land use, through zoning decisions, you're going to preserve the farmland for generations to come. That's a fallacy, it's false. Along with the land use provisions, you need an economic plan. I know my colleague from the Ministry of Agriculture is here this evening. He has a report before him that they commissioned: some good things in that report, some things that need to go further. I encourage him to look at what the Niagara agricultural committee and the OFA, for example, have brought forward. If you want to keep the farmland in production you need to support the farmers, not land use only. It's a viability plan for our farmers that is absolutely lacking at this point in time. In my view, they should go hand in hand: the land use in Bill 135 with a complementary agricultural plan.

The same goes for infrastructure and transportation corridors, because we know that people will be moving on beyond the greenbelt into the so-called leapfrog area. You need a transportation plan to ensure folks get to work, get to visit their families, get to travel safely and efficiently. You need to know where the infrastructure—the hydro corridors, for example—is going to go. A smart growth plan, a fully thought through plan would address those issues—the infrastructure, the farm viability plan, along with a green space preservation plan.

I think I've raised some good questions to the minister, who has not yet given a satisfactory answer as to why he wants to put this legislation put through by December 16. I've given back to them their three arguments and debunked them all. That won't happen. Those three are all false arguments. There are options the government has to put it into the new year. But I pointed out last week that an area containing a cemetery, a waste disposal site, a police training facility and industrial land is zoned for tender fruit and grape production. I know our farmers in Niagara are very talented, but I don't think the notion of them growing grapes or tender fruit in a cemetery is a realistic notion whatsoever. There are grave concerns—

Interjections.

Mr Hudak:—that the map ain't right. See, they are listening. I've encouraged; the government members are listening. I hope I'm making some headway.

On the other hand, there are some important areas that the Web site greenbelt.ca has pointed out should be set aside potentially, that should be part of a greenbelt but are not. For example, there's the Pleasantview area in Dundas, as we've heard at the public town halls—an area of 1,000 acres of rural land with many natural features. In 1995 the Ontario Municipal Board ruled that Pleasantview should not be urbanized. There's been movement to make it part of the escarpment, if I remember correctly. A good question: If this plan were based on science, why isn't Pleasantview part of the plan?

In Vaughan region as well there is Boyd Park—many key ingredients from an environmental perspective. One

wonders why that is not being preserved. Sadly, I think it's because this plan is not based on science. It's being rushed, and I fear too much based on politics as opposed to true science.

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We recommend four approaches, and as part of that more time in the new year for real public consultations to make sure that we get the plan right. To save the farm, you need to save the farmer. You need an agricultural viability plan hand in hand with this. You need support for greenbelt municipalities to make sure that they're strong, that they'll prosper, that they'll buy into this plan—direct support from the province of Ontario. A transportation and infrastructure strategy must be in place to complement the greenbelt initiative and, obviously, most importantly, the greenbelt plan should be based on real science, not political science.

Mr Wilkinson: I am looking forward to joining in the debate. I was just following up the member from Erie-Lincoln. I always describe the member from Erie-Lincoln as a fine wine. He's a fine wine from Erie-Lincoln. I can always tell by his comments. After that grave comment, it's the least I could do.

I think if you look in the dictionary under the term "time allocation," you will find the previous government and the government before that. For the two opposition parties to come into this House and bust our chops and give us a hard time is the pot calling the kettle black. This is only the third time that our party has used time allocation, and this isn't a bill that we're ramming through the Legislature—far from it. This is a bill that has already been considered by this House. There will be committee hearings. There have been many public consultations.

I want to talk tonight about two issues: the issue of legacy and the issue of action. I preface my remarks by recalling that I attended a symposium at U of T called the Natural City. There's a movement among the urban planners, something called the Natural City movement. I was a panellist there, representing my minister, the Minister of the Environment. I was joined by the member for Toronto-Danforth, Ms Churley, as well as John Godfrey, who is now a minister of the federal government. We were part of a panel.

It was part of a three-day symposium that talked about the theory of natural cities, that all creatures, not just humans, create habitat. The question is, is that habitat in balance with the rest of nature? Bees create hives and foxes burrow dens, but they have a balance with nature around them. This is the question that we have to deal with.

We are an urban people in many cases. We get together and form centres of business and commerce, but we lose that connection back with nature. As the member for Perth-Middlesex, the most productive agricultural riding in the country, where we are the food basket—

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): In the dominion.

Mr Wilkinson: In the dominion—we are the food basket of Ontario. What we have to do is find that balance between urban and rural. That area where we have to find that balance is what we call the greenbelt, a million acres, or 400,000 hectares of legacy that we will leave for future generations, where we, as a government—and I believe with some lukewarm support from the NDP and perhaps outright opposition from the official opposition—are saying to people that we have an opportunity to move forward and to get that balance right between urban and rural, to get them to live together in a balance. It's not one against the other. How do we create that?

The first thing that we have to do as a government is pass legislation that says this is the area of Ontario that we're talking about. We have some areas just north of Toronto, stretching from Niagara all the way over to the county where I was raised, Northumberland, that great swath of Ontario which should not be developed, in my opinion, for environmental and agriculture reasons. Do we let urban sprawl, something we all complain about, something we all deal with every day, go on, or do we strike a balance? That's why the greenbelt is here. That's why I'm in favour of speaking to this motion, because it goes to the question of legacy.

Joseph Addison, the great writer, said, "Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn." I would paraphrase that to say that our greenbelt legislation is a legacy that is delivered by our government, that we leave to the province that we love, that will be delivered down from generation to generation as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn.

A hundred years from now, 200 years from now, people will forget about this debate. As they forget about the Niagara Escarpment debate, as they forget about the Bruce Trail debate, what they remember is the fact that a government did it.

I know the member from Erie-Lincoln is rightfully proud of that legacy of his party, but it seems to me to be somewhat disingenuous for them to deny our party an opportunity to also add to the natural legacy. He talked about Lands for Life, an initiative that his party is proud of, but it seems that this is perhaps only available to some parties in government, not to all. We want to contribute to that great legacy and that great history in this province, and so I ask the members of the opposition, who probably will vote against time allocation tonight, is it your position that you, if you ever were to form government, would vote down the greenbelt? Would you rip up this piece of legislation? Would you say, "No, we should have unfettered urban sprawl. We should take our farmland and we should pave it. We shouldn't save it"? I don't think so.

I think there is a lot of talk, but I don't think, when it comes right down do it, that we should forget the words of Sam Rayburn, who was a US congressman of note a hundred years ago. He said at that time in the States,

"The greatest domestic problem facing our country is saving our soil and water. Our soil belongs also to unborn generations."

Mr Leal: Sam Rayburn?

Mr Wilkinson: Sam Rayburn. A hundred and fifty years ago he was discussing this question. It's the soil. There's a connection between the land and future generations, and it is at our own peril that we forget that connection. That's why I'm so happy to support this bill and why I think it is time for action.

I say that it's time for action because for thousands of years people have discussed that question of, when is it time for debate to be done and when it is time to take action? All governments have to face that. I know the member from Burlington was speaking this evening. He didn't go on and on and on about time allocation. He said, "You know, we did it, all parties do it." Eventually governments have to decide that it's time to move along and make a change for the good.

I know that the great—and I know the minister of citizenship is here—Greek Sophocles said, "Knowledge must come through action"—it comes through action. "You can have no test which is not fanciful, save by trial." That's what this place is all about; it's about action. At the end of the day we stand in our place and we vote with conviction and we decide to move forward. Some would have us move back, and I know some parties would have us move a little bit to the side, but our party is all about moving forward. That is why we were elected.

Aristotle said, "A state is not a mere society having a common place established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange.... Political society exists for the sake of noble actions and not mere companionship." Despite the companionship that we all have here this evening, it's all about noble action. I can think of very few things in this short year that I've been here where one could consider that we are taking noble action; where we're taking a step bridging that gap to unborn generations. We're saying to people that it is all about preserving our soil for future generations. It's about going to the people and saying that we have to have a symbiotic relationship between rural and urban, we have to have a relationship between the farm, the people who produce the food, and the urban people who consume it.

I can't believe for a moment that any of the political parties are so opposed to the greenbelt that in the light of day in the future they would turn around and try to rip that up. That's why no one would come back and say,

"We're going to get rid of the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Oh, we're going to get rid of the Bruce Trail. Oh, we're going to get rid of Lands for Life." You'd have your head handed to you on a plate if you were to say that. I believe that the million acres that cut through a wonderful part of Ontario are now going to be preserved in perpetuity. I give my thanks and congratulations to Minister Gerretsen, who has had to take this file and move this forward. Minister Gerretsen has a lengthy career in this House and as the great mayor of the city of Kingston. He knew around that every so often around municipal council it was time to stop talking and start doing. That is what we're doing tonight. I welcome and join all of the colleagues here this evening to vote and move forward on the greenbelt.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for debate on this motion.

Mr Kennedy has moved government notice of motion number 292.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2120 to 2124.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bountrogianni, Marie
Brown, Michael A.
Crozier, Bruce
Duncan, Dwight
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat

Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John

Nays

Dunlop, Garfield
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron

Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm

Yakubuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 23; the nays are 7.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being close to 9:30, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 2126.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East /	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton-Est	
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Prue, Michael (ND)		Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-East York /		Hamilton West /	
Beaches-York-Est		Hamilton-Ouest	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Springdale		Addington	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton Centre /	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton-Centre		Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)		Milloy, John (L)
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga		Kingston and the Islands /	
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston et les îles	
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre /	
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Centre	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley-Est	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Matthews, Deborah (L)
		London North Centre /	
Don Valley West /		London-Centre-Nord	
Don Valley-Ouest		London West /	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London-Ouest	Ramal, Khalil (L)
		London-Fanshawe	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	Markham	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga Centre /	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga-Centre	
	Hudak, Tim (PC)		
Erie-Lincoln		Mississauga East /	
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga-Est	Peterson, Tim (L)
		Mississauga South /	
Etobicoke Centre /		Mississauga-Sud	
Etobicoke-Centre		Mississauga West /	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke North /	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga-Ouest	
Etobicoke-Nord		Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Centre /	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara-Centre	
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
		Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior- North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
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Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 7 December 2004

Mardi 7 décembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 décembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I'm pleased to rise today in recognition of the 115th anniversary of Osgoode Hall Law School, an important institution in the history of Ontario. Osgoode was founded in 1889 by the Law Society of Upper Canada. Until 1957, the only avenue for admission to the bar in Ontario was through study at Osgoode Hall. Virtually every practising lawyer and sitting judge in the province was a graduate of Osgoode at that time. Osgoode Hall Law School became affiliated with York University in 1969, in a new building on campus.

As a graduate of Osgoode, I'm especially honoured to be speaking on this occasion. Osgoode Hall Law School has been home to many of today's leaders, educating thousands of lawyers and senior members of the judiciary, including former Premiers, Attorneys General, other members of the executive council and MPPs from all parties in this House.

It has been an example for other law schools to follow. It is home to the largest graduate program in Canada, home to the largest law library in Canada and home of the only professional development program in Canada. It was the first law school to establish a combined law and business degree, the first law school to develop courses in poverty law and the first law school to establish a student-staffed community legal services clinic.

It has established a reputation nationally and internationally of prominence and distinction. No doubt all members will join me in congratulating the faculty, staff, students and alumni of Osgoode Hall Law School on their 115th anniversary, recognizing their importance to the history of the province of Ontario.

TRIPLE M METAL

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I am pleased to rise today to acknowledge a local business, Triple M Metal, and their tremendous contribution to my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I recently attended Triple M Metal groundbreaking

for their subsidiary's state-of-the-art aluminum remelting plant, Matalco.

Triple M Metal is a leading-edge recycling company, and its subsidiary Matalco will be a global leader in the field of aluminum remelting. When fully operational at the end of 2005, Matalco will employ 50 people and produce prime-quality aluminum billets, remelted from such items as junked cars and metal debris from building demolitions. There is currently a great need for aluminum billets, and Matalco is filling that need by providing high-grade aluminum billets for the transportation, construction and consumer goods industries worldwide.

Most importantly, Matalco will use the most advanced and sophisticated remelting technology and equipment in the world, with industry-leading environmental and energy-efficient processes resulting in virtually no generated waste.

It's with great pleasure that I acknowledge the positive contributions of Triple M Metal and Matalco to my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and to the province of Ontario.

CHILDREN'S CAR SEATS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Yesterday, this House passed into law Bill 73, a transportation safety bill that compels families with young children to buy new car booster seats and use these seats until their children grow to be 4 foot 10 and 80 pounds, or until they turn nine years old. While I voted for this bill at third reading and support the principle of improving safety for children, I must inform the House that in the government's haste, it has overlooked an important concern for young families: affordability.

These booster seats are not cheap. I was in a large retail store in my riding on the weekend, and the booster seats that are large enough to accommodate an 80-pound child cost between \$70 and \$100 each. Imagine the cost to families with three, four or even five children, already stretching their budgets to make ends meet. And to make matters worse, yesterday the Minister of Transportation appeared to be indifferent to this concern, apparently telling the *Toronto Star* that there would be no financial help for families to help them buy these booster seats, this in spite of the fact that car seats for infants and smaller children are tax-exempt and have been exempt from the 8% provincial sales tax for years.

My Bill 77, which I introduced in this House seven months ago yesterday, would provide these young famil-

ies with a tax break on the purchase of new booster seats by exempting the seats from provincial sales tax, a modest proposal consistent with the way we already treat car seats for smaller children, and something that would benefit young families at very little cost to the treasury. I ask the government to allow a vote on Bill 77 before the House breaks for Christmas.

OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm reading this on behalf of Rosario Marchese, the NDP education critic, who is caught up in the media studio at the moment.

New Democrats congratulate the faculty, students, alumni and staff of Osgoode Hall Law School on the role that the school has played in legal and public education in Ontario for the past 115 years. Osgoode Hall Law School was founded by the Law Society of Upper Canada in 1889 and is the oldest continuously operating law school in the province of Ontario.

On the 115th anniversary of its founding, New Democrats recognize Osgoode Hall Law School's significant achievements and contributions to public and private life in Ontario. Osgoode Hall Law School has achieved excellence in legal education and has contributed to an increasingly diverse legal profession, reflecting the multicultural and evolving character of Ontario society.

Today, we'd like to celebrate the school's progressive character and its contributions to this province. Osgoode was the first law school in Canada to establish a combined law and environmental studies degree. Osgoode was the first law school in Canada to establish a student-staffed community legal services clinic, Parkdale Community Legal Services, and Osgoode was the first Canadian law school to develop courses and programs in poverty law.

In keeping with this proud history of firsts, New Democrats hope that Osgoode Hall Law School becomes the first post-secondary institution in Canada to stop ratcheting up tuition fees, so that all young people of all backgrounds may benefit from the excellent legal education offered by this great institution.

RIDE PROGRAM

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): The holiday season is upon us. In addition to the celebrations across our province, the month of December also marks the beginning of the OPP's five-week OPP festive season RIDE, or Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere. This program has been in place since 1995, and over the past nine years, the province of Ontario has seen a dramatic drop in impaired driving.

The festive season RIDE program has just released its statistics for its first week. The OPP issued 98 12-hour suspensions, and 60 persons were charged with alcohol-related Criminal Code driving offences. Encouragingly,

these numbers are down significantly from the same period last year.

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I know that in my riding of Mississauga East, there are rising concerns about the number of impaired drivers on the road. To address this concern, Peel Regional Police have stepped up their efforts this year, increasing the number of officers on the road with the RIDE program 50% from last year's numbers. The Peel police have also launched a new last-drink program, wherein they focus their efforts on roads which had higher numbers of people caught driving impaired. The hope is that by intensifying their efforts, they can curb last year's increase in drunk driving in Peel.

Impaired driving is a serious problem that affects the safety of all Ontarians. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the RIDE officers both in my region of Peel and across the province of Ontario. Their continued efforts are keeping our roads safe both during the holiday season and throughout the year.

TIME ALLOCATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Those at home who are missing watching NHL hockey this season can entertain themselves with the flip-flop Olympics coming from across the way from the government members.

We've already seen the daring double gainer on hydro pricing. We saw the back flip on Dalton McGuinty's promise, now broken, to hold the line on taxes. We are seeing a very slow 180-degree twist on closing the coal-fired plants by 2007, and now we are seeing some flip-flops when it comes to time allocation motions in the Legislature.

The bronze medal for time allocations goes to Minister John Gerretsen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who had once said it was "a complete attack on the democratic principles and the parliamentary rules that have been a tradition within the Westminster model," but last night they passed a time allocation motion on Bill 135.

The silver medal goes to the intrepid House leader, Mr Duncan, who has brought in now three time allocation motions in the last three business days in a row: every business day of the last three, a new time allocation motion coming forward from across the way.

But the gold medal winner of the flip-flop time allocation Olympics is the man who said, "For a government that promised to be open, this closure action is the height of arrogance, the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and you said you were for." Who said that? Dalton McGuinty. Dalton McGuinty said one thing when he was in opposition and said something completely different once he became Premier.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I would like to take a moment in this House to send my

deep and personal condolences to the family of a young man in my community. This 15-year-old took his life on Saturday, November 16, and it caused great sadness for all of us.

His parents tell us that their son felt compelled to end his life because of the continuous bullying he received from his peers both inside the school and outside through the Internet. Whether this bullying was verbal or physical really doesn't matter. It was so severe that it caused him to feel that he needed to end his own life. It was really a shock for my community, and it's not something that we often see in our rural communities. We are very devastated by this tragedy. That is why I feel compelled to address it here today.

In rural communities, we pride ourselves on knowing our neighbours, and many knew this young man and his family. We also have neighbours and friends who have children who attend this high school. We share the sadness, and we also worry about those other students. One student told me that many of the kids at school are bullied, just some more than others. It's not just a matter of kids being cruel to each other. This is a situation where the student felt so tormented that he was at a point where he could no longer deal with it.

I understand from our Minister of Education that a key component of our safe schools program is the creation of an environment that fosters respect, responsibility and dignity for all. We need to ensure that our schools have the resources to deal with situations where children are being abused or being abusive. We need to ensure that our children know where they can get help when they find themselves in a situation where they are continually being abused.

I encourage all school boards and schools to adhere to the Minister of Education's safe schools program so that we can foster safe, secure learning environments for mutual respect among peers. For the young man in my community it's too late, but it doesn't have to be too late for many other students who are going through the same situation.

OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): It's with pleasure that I too rise today to mark the 115th anniversary of Osgoode Hall Law School.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging in the gallery today three guests from Osgoode: associate dean Janet Walker; president of the Legal and Literary Society, Rich Appiah; and chair of student caucus, Antonio Di Domenico. Welcome to all of you.

As you've heard today, the Law Society of Upper Canada founded Osgoode Hall Law School in 1889, and today it is the oldest, continuously operating law school in Ontario. Until 1957, the only avenue for admission to the bar in Ontario was through study at Osgoode law school. That means that until then, virtually every practising lawyer and sitting judge in the province was a graduate of Osgoode. When Osgoode Hall Law School

became affiliated with York University in 1969, it continued to educate thousands of lawyers and senior members of the judiciary.

Today, there are 15,000 graduates of Osgoode Hall Law School practising in Ontario and elsewhere around the world. Graduates include numerous judges, including the current Chief Justice and Associate Chief Justice of Ontario, plus numerous Premiers and Attorneys General, including the present Attorney General, other members of the executive council and members of this Legislature.

Osgoode continues to be one of Canada's leading law schools, committed to excellence in legal education and legal scholarship, and plays an essential role in helping us achieve a just society. This is reflected in its motto, "Through law to justice."

On behalf of the government, I congratulate the faculty, students, alumni and staff of Osgoode law school on the important role the school has played in legal and public education in Ontario for the past 115 years. I am confident that all those associated with the school will continue to make such contributions to the public good in the future.

HANUKKAH

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Tonight, Jewish families across Ontario are going to sit down to celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights. In fact, at 5:30 in front of the Legislature, we'll join the Honourable Monte Kwinter in lighting the menorah right here at Queen's Park, and later on, at 7:30 at Ross Lord Park, in honour of Matti Baranovski, we're also going to light the menorah.

Hanukkah centres around the lighting of the eight candles of the menorah. One additional candle is lit on every subsequent night until eight nights have passed and all eight candles are lit. This tradition of lighting the menorah and celebrating Hanukkah goes back over 2,000 years.

The Jewish people rose up against their oppressors, led by the valiant Judah Maccabee and his four brothers. After three years of fighting, the Maccabee army was finally successful in driving out the oppressive regime. The victory was symbolized by the reclamation of the holy temple in Jerusalem, the most holy place of worship, of which only the western wall remains today.

However, the holy temple had been desecrated and its eternal flame extinguished. After restoring the temple, the Maccabees could only find enough oil to light the eternal flame for one day, but eight days were needed to make more oil to keep the eternal flame burning. The flame was lit anyway, but to everyone's joy and amazement, the flame continued burning for eight days, enough time to replenish the oil.

This is the miracle of Hanukkah, which is celebrated by Jewish families all around the world today. I want to wish all Jewish families across Ontario a happy Hanukkah.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Standing order 62(a) provides that “the standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received the report from the standing committee on estimates for certain ministries on Thursday, November 18, 2004, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 62(b), the supplementary estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—supplementary estimates only—are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 60, the estimates before the committee of the Office of the Assembly, Office of the Chief Election Officer, Ombudsman Ontario and the Office of the Auditor General not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Motions? Statements by ministries?

Interjection.

The Speaker: There were no deferred votes, so we’re moving along.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Orders of the day.

The Speaker: The government House leader says “orders of the day,” which he would like, but it is oral questions.

1350

ORAL QUESTIONS

DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. Yesterday, in your absence, I asked the Minister of Finance about the serious breach of privacy involving some 27,000 people. I posed those questions to the minister responsible, the finance minister, and he declined to answer for something that is clearly his responsibility. I also asked your minister responsible for consumer protection, and he declined as well.

Premier, when you sat in this chair, you were very clear about how you expected breaches of privacy to be dealt with. Now that 27,000 individual breaches have occurred on your watch, your minister responsible refuses to take that responsibility. A quote from you in Hansard in 1996—this is your comment: “I am con-

vinced that the Information and Privacy Commissioner will not consider the issue of ministerial accountability. That does not come under the jurisdiction of her office.” Do you still agree with yourself?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me take the opportunity on behalf of the government to say that what happened was unacceptable. I want to commend Minister Phillips for taking the appropriate actions at the earliest possible opportunity.

Just so people will know what happened here in terms of our reaction to this, when we learned of this we immediately contacted the Information and Privacy Commissioner and made that individual aware of the circumstances. We extended the courtesy of contacting the opposition and letting them know what had happened. We have invited in the Information and Privacy Commissioner and offered all courtesies and co-operation to that individual so we can ensure that we find out exactly what happened and make sure it does not happen again.

In my supplementary, I will compare and contrast what we did with what the Tories did on their watch.

Mr Runciman: What is totally unacceptable is the Premier getting up here and saying something completely different from the position he took in opposition, sitting in this chair. We have quote after quote with respect to these kinds of privacy issues, where the Premier took a completely different position than the one he is offering the people of Ontario today.

Premier, your Minister of Finance’s name and signature appeared on each of these cheques. They were sent from the Ministry of Finance—it’s printed on the stubs—yet you’ve chosen to make Mr Phillips the fall guy for your government, apparently to protect Mr Sorbara. You were clear about ministerial accountability when you sat in this chair and now you seem to have a different view—never mind the 27,000 people who now have their SIN numbers and personal information being shipped all around Ontario. Why are you more interested in protecting Greg Sorbara than the privacy of 27,000 Ontarians?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I want to contrast the cooperative and responsible manner in which we have dealt with this issue, and here is the difference: In 1997, as part of its review of government assets, Mike Harris’s Privatization Secretariat contracted with Angus Reid to survey POSO account holders. It turns out that some 50,000 bank account numbers, balances and social insurance numbers were made available, in breach of information and privacy laws.

What’s really galling is that this inadvertent release of information was kept covert, and covered up, effectively, from the Information and Privacy Commissioner for some two and a half years. When she reported on this ultimately, she said that she was “unable to conduct a full and complete investigation in this case.” She found that the Ministry of Finance “endeavoured to restrict the scope of the investigation and the investigative tools available to the” Information and Privacy Commissioner.

She concluded that documents provided by the ministry were partially blacked out or severed, an action that was “disrespectful of the mandate of this office.”

I'd ask you, Speaker, but more importantly, the people of Ontario, to compare and contrast our approach. As soon as we found out about this, we acted on this. We made this public to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. As a courtesy to the opposition, we did not hide this, we did not cover this. We acknowledged that it was a mistake, and we're taking the necessary steps to make sure that it does not occur again.

Mr Runciman: What has happened is that they've put 27,000 identities at risk. Six days after this, the people still haven't received any word. Mr Paul Kyte from Belleville told us today that he's still waiting to get information from the government.

We talk about contrast; I want to cite another one for the Premier. In the wake of Jim Wilson's resignation in 1996 over a single alleged breach of privacy, Mr McGuinty said that an FOI commissioner's investigation wouldn't do, that it's conducted in secret, with no media or public scrutiny, no testimony under oath. That was your position in opposition when you were sitting in this chair.

Premier, you felt that a legislative inquiry was appropriate for one single breach of privacy in 1996. Today, for 27,000 individual breaches, you don't believe it's appropriate. How can you justify that position, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Just to pursue what happened in the case of the POSO release of confidential information, on May 18, 2000, Speaker Gary Carr found that there was a *prima facie* case of contempt. He ruled that “in official business dealings with an officer of this House, individuals owe an obligation of accountability to Parliament. That our own officer advises that the opposite was the case is sufficient cause in my mind to find that a *prima facie* case of contempt of Parliament has been made out.” That specifically addressed the manner in which the previous government, the Conservative government, failed to own up to the release of confidential information over a period of two and a half years and made deliberate efforts to thwart the investigation on the part of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

We have done the very opposite. We have owned up to this. We have accepted responsibility for this. We've invited the Information and Privacy Commissioner to come in and determine exactly what happened and to offer the best advice we can get to make sure it does not happen again. We extended the courtesy to members of the opposition to inform them of this issue. I believe we've acted responsibly and quickly, given the circumstances.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier. Premier, your Minister of Finance is again entangled in another scandal, another mess, as a result of his involvement with Royal Group Technologies. He was

an officer and a member of the board at the time the relevant situation arose—that Royal Polymers is 100% owned by Royal Group Technologies. On August 14, 2003, Royal Polymers allegedly discharged water that contained over 1,000 pounds of a carcinogenic chemical called vinyl chloride monomer into the drainage system that leads to the St Clair River. It is charged that the company failed to disclose this to the Ministry of the Environment until four days later.

Both the spill and the failure to disclose are the subject of charges under the Environmental Protection Act as well as the Ontario Water Resources Act, which could result in very substantial fines. Premier, these charges are to be heard on January 14, 2005, in court. Will you ask the minister to step aside while these charges are dealt with in the courts?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): No, I will not.

Mr Flaherty: Premier, these are your standards that I'm asking you to follow. You told the Toronto Star on October 9, 1999—I assume you meant what you said, but we'll see—“We have a tradition in our parliamentary system which requires ministers who find themselves under a cloud, even if only temporarily, have a responsibility to step aside pending the outcome of any inquiry.”

1400

The Minister of Finance at the relevant times was on the board. He was part of the management team of the company that is being dragged into court by your Ministry of the Environment, charged under government legislation with dumping volatile carcinogenic chemicals into the St Clair River.

This is a very serious matter. You say you care about environmental concerns. You say you have standards for your ministers in government. You say you believe in ministerial responsibility. If you do, uphold your own standards and have the minister step aside until the charges are heard.

Hon Mr McGuinty: If one of my ministers were to find themselves under a real, as opposed to a virtual or fictitious cloud, then I would act accordingly, but the only cloud here is in the mind of the member opposite with respect to this particular matter. For that reason, I will not be asking for the resignation or stepping aside of anyone.

Mr Flaherty: Surely even you, Premier, know that corporations act through their officers and they act through their boards. That's why legislation in Ontario makes them involved and responsible for their duties as directors and officers of a corporation.

Your own words again, Premier, March 2, 2004, in a scrum: “(Minister Sorbara) has indicated, and we have agreed, that should he become the subject of an investigation—not even a charge, just the subject of an investigation—he will step aside.”

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): That's ridiculous.

Mr Flaherty: The Minister of Education thinks it's ridiculous that someone can be a member of a board of directors, an officer of a company, charged with dumping of chemicals in the St Clair River, and serve as the Minister of Finance while the charges are pending. Do you agree with the Minister of Education on that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I remember the tremendous disappointment with which the member opposite received the news of the Integrity Commissioner, who cleared the finance minister of all the spurious claims and allegations previously advanced by him.

I would suggest to him that if his concern is real, if he thinks it has some merit, he should do what he has done in the past: Send this off to the Integrity Commissioner, an impartial, objective third party, who will review the matter in the appropriate way. But my conclusion leads me to conclude that I will not be asking anyone for any resignation or stepping aside.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The question is for the Premier. Premier, you are rapidly turning into medicare's moving target. First you said you were sure that doctors would ratify your deal. When the doctors voted down your deal, you said you'd work with them to strike a deal. A week later, you said you'd impose a deal, even though that would poison the province's relationship with our doctors and set back primary care reform.

Today, another McGuinty flip-flop: You now say you want to start talking again. How do you expect Ontario's doctors to work with you to get an agreement when you, yourself, don't know what your position is from day to day and week to week?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We've been working long and hard with Ontario's doctors through their representation, the Ontario Medical Association. In fact, we devoted some nine months to what we believed was a very successful negotiating process involving some 164 separate meetings. At the end of that process, both sides' representatives signed an agreement to then recommend the agreement to their principals. Our representatives did that to us, and we took that recommendation in support of that agreement. The OMA's representatives for some reason decided they were not going to recommend the agreement to their constituency.

So we find ourselves at this point in time when we've made a tremendous amount of progress with respect to coming to an agreement that serves the interests of both Ontario doctors and Ontario patients. The conclusion we've come to at this point in time is that it's time for us to move forward on behalf of Ontarians.

Mr Hampton: What you describe is a process that took place over four weeks ago, and in the intervening four weeks, you've changed your position four times. That's why doctors are confused. That's why (1) they don't know what your real position is, and (2) they're not

sure what the process is. Your Minister of Health went out and started a strategy of vilifying and attacking doctors, so they have a hard time understanding that. The question again is, when will you know what your position is with respect to Ontario's doctors so that they can then sit down and negotiate with you, or are you still going to impose a deal?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I think it's perfectly clear from the member opposite that he's a champion of the status quo. He thinks that what we have at present, when it comes to both the quality of our health care system and its affordability, are things he's prepared to embrace. We are not.

What we said to doctors—so the member opposite is perfectly clear on this—is that we are not prepared to renegotiate the old agreement, we are not prepared to negotiate a new agreement; however, we have regard for the six specific concerns that were raised by the OMA at the time of the ratification process. What we have done is offer six separate adjustments to the existing agreement in order to improve it, in keeping with the concerns raised by the Ontario Medical Association.

I'm pleased to report that just yesterday in Hamilton, the Minister of Health indicated that we're prepared to move, as soon as this spring, on 45 new family health teams. We've got 90 communities that are banging on the door at Queen's Park, saying, "When can we move ahead with transformation in health care?" Those 45 alone will serve 650,000 Ontario patients. We look forward to moving on that.

Mr Hampton: Again, the Premier tries to avoid answering the question. I want you to know my position: I'm just opposed to all the flip-flopping. I'd like to know what the clear position of the McGuinty government is, and doctors would like to know, because they have no idea what they're being offered because they have no idea where you stand from one day to the next. They have no idea what the process is when one day you're threatening to impose a deal and the next day you suddenly say you want to talk. On issue after issue, the McGuinty government seems to say that it knows best, but then a day or two later, you recognize that you've got a problem with your position.

Again, Premier, this is a very serious issue. There is a doctor shortage in the province. When is the McGuinty government going to figure out its own position, so that doctors will finally know what your position is and what your process is? Are you imposing a deal, or are you negotiating a deal? What's your position, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The only person who's confused about the transformation of our health care system is the member opposite. We know exactly where we stand when it comes to changing health care in Ontario.

Here are a few questions I might toss back to the member opposite. If he believes that we should be paying our doctors more, then he should stand in his place and say so. This deal makes them the best paid in all of Canada. If he believes that we should not move forward with family health teams and ensure that we bring more

primary care to more families and more communities around the province, then he should stand in his place and say so. If he thinks we should not be encouraging and incenting doctors to provide more prevention and to encourage them to do more work in our nursing homes and deliver more work when it comes to home care, then he should stand in his place and say so.

I can tell you, Speaker, that we're for moving forward. We're tired of the status quo. We will not defend it. We will not embrace it. We will work with our doctors and our hospitals, and we will move forward on behalf of patients.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Once again, it seems that the McGuinty government's position is as clear as mud. Before the election, Premier, you railed against the Conservative government for mismanaging our education system. You said, "The Harris-Eves government tries to run 5,000 schools from Queen's Park. They take a one-size-fits-all education funding formula and impose it on every school in the province." Today your Minister of Education is imposing a collective bargaining formula on cash-strapped school boards that he knows won't work. He's going to force the school boards to take the blame when his scheme fails.

1410

Your government has been trying to micromanage health care. That hasn't worked. Why are you now trying the famous Conservative tactic of micromanaging education?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I want to begin by complimenting and congratulating our Minister of Education, who has been working so hard to improve the quality of public education that we offer all our students. I'm pleased to say that we have a new tone in public education today in Ontario. We've made some significant progress, although we've only been on the job for some 14 months. The members opposite may not believe this is progress, but I can tell you that thousands and thousands of parents are happy that in 1,300 schools we have smaller class sizes. Parents and students alike are pleased with the fact that we've hired 1,100 more teachers. We have over 8,000 newly trained teachers with special expertise in numeracy and literacy working in our schools as a result of this minister's efforts. We're proud of those advances. We're proud of the new tone we've brought to public education. We're proud of the partnership approach we're bringing to trustees and teachers alike.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you talk about tone, about style. Let me tell you what people want to see: They want to see some substance. What they're seeing today is your government breaking another two promises. You promised to implement the Rozanski report's recommendation on school funding. You're not doing that. You promised that you would treat school boards with respect and that you would enhance their power and their decision-

making. Instead you are going to straitjacket them in terms of their decision-making. Just one question of substance, Premier: Will you implement the Rozanski report recommendations and stop strong-arming school boards like you promised?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I want to remind the member opposite that he and his party voted in favour of maintaining the private school tax credit. Now he purports to be a champion of public education in Ontario. We are also proud that, notwithstanding our fiscal constraints and the financial mess with which we have been saddled by the previous government, we're able to invest \$1.1 billion more in public education.

But more than that, what we are doing now is that the minister has acted to protect some of the important investments we have made in education. Specifically, when it comes to the money we've invested in smaller classes, the money we're investing in keeping good schools open, the money we've invested in helping struggling students in other areas, we have specifically said that the money devoted to that must remain devoted to that, that you can't use that money, which brings about some positive, substantive change inside our schools to the benefit of our students, in your negotiations with teachers. We think that's fair, we think that's reasonable, we think that's responsible and we think it's in keeping with what our responsibilities are when it comes to better education for our kids.

Mr Hampton: I don't think I heard an answer to the question of what happened to implementing the Rozanski report recommendations, but I want to go to the next promise. Before the election, you promised peace and stability in our schools. What the Minister of Education announced today is sure to result in conflict, the kind of conflict that comes from micromanaging. You said yourself before the election, "We will ensure that there is transparency in public education.... We will establish a standing committee on education to hold public hearings every year on the effectiveness of provincial funding."

There is a big hole in the provincial funding. By third-party calculations, you're close to \$700 million short. My question is, where is that standing committee on education to look into whether or not you're funding public education appropriately? Where is that promise, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Well, there's no doubt about it; there is much more work to be done when it comes to improving public education for our children, and we look forward to doing that.

But, you know, there is a common thread that runs through the questions put forward today by the leader of the NDP, and it is that he won't talk about the substance. He won't talk about the substance because he's afraid to tell us where he stands when it comes to smaller classes. I think in his heart of hearts he believes in smaller classes. He's afraid to talk about the new tone that we've struck in public education, because in his heart of hearts he supports the new relationship, the good, solid, working, positive relationship that we've struck with Ontario teachers.

He is afraid to talk about the new finances we've found to keep our good schools open, because in his heart of hearts, I know that he is supportive of our policies in that area and in so many other areas of public education.

So I say to this Legislature and to the good people of Ontario, it's time for the real Howard Hampton to step up to the plate and to tell us that he supports us when it comes to public education in the province of Ontario.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday, I rose in the House to express our condolences to the family of 16-year-old Andrew Stewart. Today, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex gave a moving statement about a 15-year-old who committed suicide as a result of bullying over the Internet.

Minister, you and your Premier voted against the Safe Schools Act in the last government. You have now been Minister of Education for more than a year. As the Minister of Education, you have had more than one year to deal with the important issue of bullying in our schools, yet you found time to have your ministry develop guidelines and policies about what goes into vending machines in our schools. Would you stand in your place today and tell us what you have done to address this important issue of bullying that is taking place every day, increasingly so, in our schools right across this province? What have you done?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I first want to express what I think is the sentiment of everyone in this House, which is condolences for the families involved in two separate tragedies that have struck young individuals, young adults, in our province. I think it is vitally important that we support their schools and their families at this particular time.

I will say, in a completely separate manner, that this government takes the safety of individuals in our schools and on the school grounds and, indeed, anywhere we can have an influence, as our primary responsibility. Before we get to educate, the kids and the young adults need to be safe.

And we have been collaborating with some initiatives around the province already. We have been providing some ability.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Kennedy: I hear the member opposite grumble something about other things we've done, and I'm sure he doesn't mean to imply in any shape, way or form that there is any active omission or commission by anyone in relation to the tragedies that have taken place.

What I will say to those families and to the public at large is that there is an initiative on safety that we have worked on collaboratively with the school boards, that there is much unfinished business when it comes to safe schools and that we will be making an announcement within a very short period of time about that. Appropriately, it will be general in its impact, and appropriately, it will supply an appropriate role for the provincial

government to make sure that everything that can be done is being done in our schools.

Mr Klees: Actually, I am suggesting that there has been an omission on the part of this minister to serve the schools and the parents and the students of this province.

This minister has had priorities that had nothing to do with the important things that are taking place in our schools. I'm putting him, today, on the spot. I'm asking him whether he has, since I tabled the letter from Mr Thomson, who has repeatedly appealed to the minister and to his school to intervene in a bullying of his own child at Mother Teresa High School in Ottawa. I delivered this letter to him yesterday. This is a serious issue. This young child has been beaten. Has the minister personally intervened yet? Or does he still not think that bullying in schools is enough of a priority over and above vending machines, junk food and all the other things he has been occupying his time with?

1420

Hon Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, there is nothing that I want to add to the member's line of questioning. If there is anything that the families and affected students deserve right now, it is the respect and dignity of this House.

There is public policy that gives us latitude to work on things that in a general way will help make our schools safer, and that is forthcoming. There is work that we've already done. When it comes to specific cases, whether they're given to me by the member opposite or by anyone else, what I will say is—and I want this to be known—if there is anyone out there who is affected by bullying, their situation will not be discussed in this House. We will not name them or their parents or anyone else. There is enough stigma attached.

What I would say is—and I think members opposite know in this House—if there is any situation that the office of the minister can help with, we work diligently in that regard. I want that expectation to be known by everyone watching, because there is an abiding interest by this government to do everything possible to maintain a safe environment. There may be individuals out there who think they—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.
Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. New question.

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the city of Toronto kicked off its budget debate with worries about user fees, tax hikes and TTC fare increases. Why have they done this? It's because you haven't paid your share. You have arbitrarily capped Ontario's contribution to Toronto's social service and housing programs. That has left Toronto \$71 million poorer. They have had to lay off 1,000 staff in the last couple of years, but unfortunately, they have had to hire 1,100 more people to look after the downloaded services. Toronto's budget chief says that this is unfair.

Premier, in your election program, you called municipal downloading “unfair, short-sighted and destructive to our communities.” Will you stop being unfair, short-sighted and destructive to our communities, and will you restore the 80-20 split that served this province so well before you were elected?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): Just to be clear, we are very proud of the good working relationship we have developed with the city of Toronto. We're now in earnest negotiations to modernize the City of Toronto Act, so that we can work together to strengthen this city, this engine of our economy and the Canadian economy, and so that we can help it stand on its own two feet.

But I'm also proud to say that as a result of our gas tax initiative, this year alone the city of Toronto will get an additional \$81 million. There is more work to be done—we are all aware of that—when it comes to ensuring that the city of Toronto has the necessary wherewithal to chart its own destiny, and we look forward to working with them.

Mr Prue: Mr Premier, I'm not talking about the gas tax, and I'm not talking about transit. I'm talking about your election program, in which you said downloading provincial problems on to cities and towns resulted “in cuts to services and crumbling infrastructure.” That's exactly what we're seeing in Toronto and literally every other city in this province. You know that property taxes alone cannot cover what is happening out there, but you have been slow to help all the towns and cities of this province on the downloaded social services.

Unless you do your part, the gap between the revenue and the expenses for municipalities in every municipality will continue to grow. You've said it yourself. Downloading has created a real mess for municipalities. When are you going to stop mimicking Mike Harris and start keeping your own promises?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The Minister of Finance would like to speak to this.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I think the member, were he wanting to be fair, would be mentioning some very special assistance that went to the city of Toronto last year in the form of a grant of some \$90 million on the TTC.

I think he would want to mention, as well, our government's determination—and it was in the budget last May—that we are going to be uploading, not downloading, more of the cost of public health. I think he would want to mention the unique negotiations that are going on with the city of Toronto on a wide variety of issues.

I think, in fact, he would want to let the public know that for the first time in eight and a half years there is a really strong, constructive and productive relationship between this government at Queen's Park and the government of the city of Toronto on Queen Street.

EDUCATION

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, today you announ-

ced that our government is working to bring peace and stability to the school system. For the past eight years, our education system was subjected to constant attacks by the previous government. They left schools ravaged and those who worked in them demoralized.

On the campaign trail in Willowdale last year, more than anything else I heard from parents who were angry about the way the education system was being mismanaged. They were incensed by the constant bickering between the province and the school boards. They wanted a better and more stable learning environment for their children, not one where constant strikes or threats of strikes existed.

Minister, during the campaign we pledged long-term funding for the education system. How does today's announcement work to fulfill that, and how will this pledge bring peace and stability to our schools?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): Thank you very much, to the honourable member for his question. We did announce today events to further the peace and stability in our schools. It is a marked achievement that really belongs to the schools, the principals and the teachers, that they have been able to focus on student needs and are going to continue to do that.

Today, after listening and discussing carefully with the participants in the system, we've come up with some additional measures that will make sure that continues to be the case in the future. They include incentives for long-term contracts so that we can have up to four years of stability in our schools, and predictable funding stands behind that. It's in a framework.

Of course, significant funding, as our Premier has said, of \$1.1 billion is on the way to implement the Rozanski report by next year, slightly ahead of schedule. But with it comes an outlook. This is not something a government can buy; it's simply something a government can exhibit: respect. In everything we're doing, we're trying to create and maintain an environment of respect toward teachers, school boards and all participants in education, because the students benefit when that is the prevailing outlook.

Mr Zimmer: Minister, those same people who were concerned about their children's learning were also concerned with something that Ontarians in general concern themselves with. I'm talking about accountability and transparency. My constituents want to know that their tax dollars are being well spent.

Just yesterday, we passed a bill banning partisan advertising, ensuring that not a single dollar will ever be wasted on such frivolous actions again. Minister, what is your ministry doing to ensure that every dollar that is allocated for educational programs important to parents, such as smaller class sizes, is effectively spent in schools?

1430

Hon Mr Kennedy: We put forward to the school boards a range of helpful things. Part of it is new supports, including teacher development accounts and so forth, but part of it is also clarity, the improvements

we've made toward important objectives: improving English as a second language, so kids can acquire the language of instruction and do well in school; learning opportunity grants to help kids who are struggling the most go forward; good schools open grants that help rural schools be more viable. Those grants, intended that way, need to be spent on improvements.

It will be possible this year for every member of the public, every interested parent, every interested worker in the system to see where the dollars from the government have gone and how they've been distributed by the board. It still allows tremendous latitude by the board, but it clarifies exactly how the money is going to get spent and exactly how students are going to do well, while at the same time the boards are going to be able to exhibit respect and good understandings with their education workers.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): A question to the Minister of Agriculture. As you know, prices for cash crops are half what they were last spring: beef; tobacco is a disaster; apples, potatoes and other fruit and vegetable crops are in a very bad position.

You signed on to the CAIS program. These farmers are desperate for help, but your program is failing them. The program allows farmers, who have been processed, to appeal 90 days after getting their calculation of benefits programs. The problem is, I have yet to have a farmer tell me—none of them, actually, have received their CPD statements.

It's now three weeks before Christmas. Minister, how do you expect farmers to plan for the coming year when many of them won't know for another three months whether they'll be receiving CAIS benefits?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I take exception to the comment the member has made about the CAIS program. The agricultural policy framework is going to bring \$1.7 billion in support to agriculture in this province. The member may be critical of the CAIS program, but I think he needs to recognize that we've received over 30,000 applications for the CAIS program. We've processed in excess of 13,000 applications, and over \$55 million has been paid out to the farmers in this province.

That's why we took a proactive approach. I don't know if the honourable member took up the offer to appear before a session that we put together for all members of this House to inform them of the CAIS program. If he has a specific example of a producer who needs to know the status of his file, I ask that he fill out a confidentiality form, have that forwarded to our MPP liaison and we'll look into that specific issue.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member for Oxford.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Minister, there seems to be a disparity between what you think is going on in your ministry and what is really happening to the

farmers in Ontario. Almost half of the farmers in Ontario who applied for CAIS still do not have a processed application. The minister has taken so long to get his act together that those 18,000 farmers are just receiving notices or have yet to be told what they need to qualify for the 2003 safety net funds.

That track record is bad enough, but over 15,000 farmers in this province didn't even bother to apply for CAIS. Either they couldn't come up with the deposit money or they just didn't know about the program.

Considering the incompetence that has been shown so far with the farmers who have applied, Minister, what are you going to do to get the other 15,000 farmers involved? What are you going to do to ensure that all the farmers of Ontario are aware of, and have equal access to, the CAIS program?

Hon Mr Peters: I take some real exception to the comments the member just made. I think it's terribly disrespectful that you would call a member of the public service incompetent. I think you owe the public sector of this province an apology for calling public sector employees that word.

As I said earlier, we're moving forward with the CAIS program. I just announced this morning market revenue insurance: \$94 million in support for the grains and oilseeds sector in this province. Two weeks ago, we announced \$173 million in wedge funding in support of the agricultural community.

Again, as I said to the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, if he has specific examples, fill out the confidentiality form, contact the ministry and we'll look into specific files. As well, I would welcome honourable members' comments as we finish our first year of the CAIS program and undertake a comprehensive review. I would welcome your constructive comments about how we can make it better. These programs—CAIS and production insurance—are there to help the farmers in this province. He could do the respectful thing and help the farmers of the province as well.

Interjections.

Mr Hardeman: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to point out to this House that I at no time referred to the incompetency of the ministry—

The Speaker: Thank you. That's not a point of order. New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. In Sudbury, the crisis facing alternate level of care patients continues because there are not enough permanent long-term-care placements in our community. The Sudbury Regional Hospital will once again be forced to send long-term-care patients out of the community, to Espanola and Manitoulin Island, to get their needs met.

On October 27, your government announced 10 temporary long-term-care beds at Pioneer Manor, even though Pioneer Manor could have accommodated 30 temporary beds and even though Sudbury city council

had urged you to fund 30 temporary beds in order to meet local needs. Today, nine of the 10 beds at Pioneer Manor are full and there are 20 alternate level of care patients at Sudbury Regional Hospital waiting to be discharged for long-term care.

Premier, will you finally do the right thing and fund 30 temporary long-term-care beds at Pioneer Manor so the frail and elderly do not have to be sent far from home to have their needs met?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I know the Minister of Health is keeping a very watchful eye on this matter, and I had the opportunity to become still a bit more acquainted with it personally when I was up in Sudbury last week to announce our very important prosperity for the north plan.

That is why we have announced thus far 10 temporary beds. We are watching this very closely. Our broader plan calls for relieving pressures on hospitals by making more investments in home care and long-term care, public health, more prevention, more family health teams and the like. But I understand and am somewhat acquainted, although the minister himself is much more acquainted, with the pressures affecting the people of Sudbury. I know he is keeping a very close eye on this.

Ms Martel: Premier, if I might, the frail and elderly and their families are not very interested today in your long-term plan. They are more interested in ensuring they don't have to go to Manitoulin Island and Espanola to get their long-term-care needs met. You see, this situation could have been resolved in October if only your government would have agreed to fund 30 temporary beds at Pioneer Manor. The space is available. The need is there. City council urged you by way of resolution to fund those beds to meet the local needs. Your government is failing to respond to the long-term-care needs of the frail and elderly in our community. It makes no sense for them to have to go far from home for care, to Manitoulin Island and Espanola, when the space is available for their care in our community.

I ask you again, Premier, will you finally fix this situation and fund 30 temporary beds at Pioneer Manor so the frail and elderly don't have to go far from home for long-term care?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm not sure how much more I can add to what I've already said, except to say this: Many of us in this Legislature have parents who are approaching an age where they may have to go into a nursing home. Obviously we would all prefer that they be near to their home and near to us, and in an ideal world we would be able to accommodate that, but we have to live in the real world, and from time to time there will be some patients, some of our parents, who are a little bit farther than we would like.

But I can tell you this: What we are working on is a bigger solution. I know that the Minister of Health—

Interjection.

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member opposite may not be interested in hearing this, but I think Ontarians

generally are. She has raised a good issue and I think it's worthy of a half-decent response. The minister is not here. He has indicated to me that this is a very important concern to him. He has specifically referenced the situation in Sudbury. That's why he has acted in the case of that particular community by creating 10 temporary beds. Obviously there is more to be done. I know the minister is working on it and looks forward to making more announcements in the future.

1440

LUMBER INDUSTRY

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Earlier today I received a phone call from Longlac Wood Industries and was told that they are currently evaluating the feasibility of a project to construct a new state-of-the-art facility to manufacture oriented strand board in the municipality of Greenstone. As you know, oriented strand board is a modern value-added product used in new residential construction, and the possibility of this new operation is quite exciting. Having said that, LWI has also indicated to me that they are evaluating this as a replacement for their current facilities, which they believe are no longer sustainable.

Minister, can you give me a sense of how this process will unfold and, more specifically, can you tell my constituents and others how they can make their views known on the proposed oriented strand board mill?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I'd like to thank the member for the question. I was with him a couple of months ago in the community of Longlac and I know how totally dependent that community is on the forest sector. This proposal is very exciting news because it addresses the issue of starting to add more value to the forest fibre that we derive from the boreal forest up there. What's very nice about this, besides creating a more modern product than the poplar ply and the waferboard that's presently being manufactured at this time, is that the modern machinery making oriented strand board can now use more underutilized species with the aspen poplar, like birch, balsam poplar and other low-grade hardwoods. So this is very good news.

We're posting this on the Environmental Bill of Rights Web site and, once we get the comments in, I'll be making a decision whether we will be issuing a facility licence or not.

Mr Gravelle: Exciting news. Obviously, if approved, the construction of this new mill in the Greenstone area will continue to provide jobs in harvesting, road construction and transportation, and will hopefully offset the impact of the closure of the existing aging facilities.

As we've all said many times before, forestry is tremendously important to northern communities. It employs about 80,000 workers and generates annual sales of somewhere around \$18 billion. Almost 50 communities in northern Ontario are heavily dependent on the forest

sector to sustain their economies, and the LWI operation in Greenstone is no exception to that.

In addition to the decision you'll be making regarding this new operation in Greenstone, can you also tell the Legislature what the province is doing to curb job loss in the forest industry and to ensure that the forest industry stays strong into the future?

Hon Mr Ramsay: This proposal does come at a very good time because right now the forest sector is under some tremendous challenges: international competition, the rising Canadian dollar, high energy costs, and the softwood tariff from the United States, which is imposing a lot of penalties on the exportation of our softwood into the United States.

Last week, I announced a minister's forest council, bringing together the top CEOs, the top labour people and some independent experts to give me a report by April of next year as to what we can do to put this industry on a firm footing. This industry has to remain competitive. It's very important to the northern economy, and I thank the member very much for his interest in this sector.

AGRICULTURAL LAND

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: During the estimates committee on October 20, I asked you if we could expect some sort of agricultural viability plan to support greenbelt farmers before the introduction of the legislation. In response, you stated, "You'll have to wait until this bill gets introduced and find out the details at that time." We waited, and found out that it was nothing but another broken Liberal promise.

Minister, I ask you again, will you commit to us today and to farmers in the greenbelt area of Ontario that by the time Bill 135 goes to committee, you will come forward with a provincially funded farm viability plan to support farmers in the greenbelt area, backed up by provincial dollars?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'm sure the Minister of Agriculture is pleased to answer this question.

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): It's quite hilarious to see the advocacy of this member on behalf of farmers, because when he was in government they cut over \$100 million from the agriculture budget, and his advocacy of and sudden interest in preserving tender fruit lands, when there was a tender fruit land preservation program in place that his government cancelled as well.

We moved very quickly in bringing forward the agricultural advisory team. Former federal minister Lyle Vanciel and Bob Bedggood, president of the Agricultural Adaptation Council of Ontario and former president of the Christian Farmers Federation, undertook an exhaustive consultation around the province to look at the very issues the honourable member made reference

to. Their comprehensive recommendations were brought forward. Some of those initial recommendations regarding minimum distance separation and severances of surplus dwellings have been incorporated into the greenbelt legislation. We're moving forward on the implementation of others of those recommendations.

Mr Hudak: The minister talks about hilarious. Sadly, his answers have become a running joke in this Legislature. Minister, you know as well as I do that you've done studies, you've done consultations, but you haven't made one step in action to support the greenbelt farmers. It's a simple question, and that's the main conceit of your legislation. Land use alone isn't going to keep the tender fruit land growing. Land use alone isn't going to keep the Holland Marsh in production. The conceit of your legislation is, you actually need a farm viability plan. It galls grape growers, it galls tender fruit growers, it galls vegetable growers, that they say they can protect the land through land use changes.

Minister, you know as well as I do—you want to save the farm, save the farmer. Please tell us that by the time this bill goes to consultations, you'll have a real plan put forward, backed by provincial dollars, not just more talk and more studies—real action.

Hon Mr Peters: We are very conscious of ensuring the viability of agriculture not just within the greenbelt but all across this province. That's why we've come forward with a number of support programs to ensure that we are there supporting the farmers of this province.

You know, it's interesting when you read the Wine Council of Ontario press release of October 28, 2004, that it says, "The fact that urbanization of our unique agricultural lands will be prevented is great news.... We have long sought a strong provincial policy that will prohibit severing these lands for residential purposes."

As a result, even the Niagara Peninsula conducted their own study looking at the impact of the greenbelt. They showed very clearly that you offer the suggestion that farmers should be compensated. Some farmers have suggested that they should be compensated for lost value, based on the perceived value of their land at some point in the future, assuming that certain events come to fruition. But perceived or speculative value is based on things that may happen, not things that necessarily will happen.

We're going to be there to support the agricultural community, not only in the greenbelt but all across this province.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, a year and a half ago, you promised swift action on a transformational scheme for northern Ontario drivers: studded tires. You said, "We will permit northern drivers to use this important road safety equipment during the winter." Some 14 months later—it's your second winter as government—slush, ice and snow cover the roads in Red Lake, in

Dryden, in Thunder Bay, in Timmins, but your studded tire scheme seems to have developed a leak.

Premier, when did you slam the brakes on studded tires, the signature McGuinty promise for northern Ontario drivers?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): In response to the member's question, you wouldn't be slamming the brakes on a slippery road, because you would be sliding all over the place. You would be out of control, like the leader of the third party is in asking this question.

You have to be very, very careful, when you drive on winter roads, that you do so with caution and use all the necessary tools that are in our arsenal to ensure that you arrive safely. I've got to be perfectly honest: We fully intend to ensure that winter driving is safe for all north-erners.

Mr Hampton: I thought the studded tire promise had developed a leak. Obviously, with the McGuinty government, it's a blowout.

Premier, here is the real issue. People across northern Ontario know that with icy highways, they are literally taking their lives and putting them at risk when they go to a medical appointment and even when they go to work. They know that after the privatization of highway maintenance, our highways are not as safe as they need to be.

Since your studded tire promise has clearly developed a leak, when will you address the real problem? When will you bring highway maintenance back into the public sector so that dedicated, knowledgeable, experienced people are keeping our highways clean and safe?

1450

Hon Mr Bartolucci: Again, I have to be perfectly honest. The only blowout is the leader of the third party. The leader of the third party, who was reluctant in the past to come on board with regard to studded tires, now tries to use a campaign commitment we made to try to embarrass us. The reality is, the only embarrassment with regard to the safety of winter roads is the third party.

We will be very happy to ensure that the people of northern Ontario know that our priority is safe winter driving, that drivers in northern Ontario have what they need to ensure they arrive safely, and we will be introducing legislation to ensure the use of studded tires.

PETITIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's indeed my pleasure to bring to the attention of the Legislature a petition I've received from my constituents in the riding of Durham.

"Whereas today in the Legislature Minister Duncan, the Acting Premier, stated that Minister of Finance Greg

Sorbara has already referred to the Ontario health premium as a tax, even in the budget lock-up;

"Whereas on May 18, during the budget lock-up, the Minister of Finance was recorded on tape as actually saying, 'We had the option of looking at personal income tax increases or going with the Ontario health premium. Our choice on the health premium was very clear. We chose it because it gives us an opportunity to identify a revenue stream separate and apart from personal income tax, that will be applied, every single cent of it, to health care.'

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully request that Minister Duncan correct the record and resign."

TUITION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to increase public funding for post-secondary education, reduce tuition fees and reinstate an upfront system of grants for Ontario students:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

I'll put my signature on this.

TAXATION

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

I affix my name in full support.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Portuguese Canadians number 171,545 in the Toronto census metropolitan area, many of whom encounter serious barriers (language, culture, and location) to accessing community and long-term services; and

"There are no long-term-care homes dedicated to the needs of Portuguese Canadian seniors; and

"Camões House for the Aged and Portuguese Community Centre of Toronto is proposing a partnership with a local long-term-care provider to purchase up to 160 existing beds in the Toronto area (for a nominal fee), to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto. This partnership is tentative and is dependent on the approval of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We encourage the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, his staff, and members of the Legislature to support the Camões proposal, and to make the appropriate administrative and policy changes required to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto."

Since I agree with this 100%, I'm delighted to affix my signature to this document.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services;

"We, the undersigned" constituents residing in Liberal MPP Michael Colle's riding, "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services, and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

Because I want to support these constituents, I will affix my signature to this petition as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and....

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

I'll give this to Daniel.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be

forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients" and "the health care system...."

It's signed by thousands of people from my riding.

1500

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's signed by about 200 people from the Chatham-Blenheim area. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close Ontario's three remaining regional centres for people with developmental disabilities, located in Smiths Falls, Orillia and Blenheim, Ontario;

"Whereas the regional centres are home to more than 1,000 disabled adults, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

"Whereas closing the regional centres will have a devastating impact on people with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities; and

"Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the regional centres to extend specialized services, support and professional training to thousands more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep Ontario's regional centres for people with developmental disabilities open, and to transform them into centres of excellence to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live."

I am in agreement and will affix my signature thereto.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter fire-

fighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead located in the town of New Tecumseth"—Alliston—"is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I've signed the petition. I obviously agree with it. I want to thank Randy Greenman of Wrays Pharmacy in Alliston for circulating this petition.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Great petition, Mr Wilson.

I keep getting petitions to stop pop cans and beer bottles littering our children's playgrounds. The petition is addressed to the assembly of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment, specifically. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children's playgrounds;

"Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

"Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

"Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminum cans worth \$27 million into landfill" sites "every year instead of recycling them;

"Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment."

I am in full agreement with this petition and I'm delighted to sign it.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have more petitions to keep Muskoka part of the north.

"Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

"Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario would adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents of other northern communities; and

"Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

"Whereas this is a mean-spirited and politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery."

I support this petition and affix my signature.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that says:

"Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at risk for medical conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts, would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

"Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

"Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

"Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician."

I'll give to it my friend page Dever today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994; and Bill 149, An Act to implement 2004 Budget measures, enact the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004, and amend various Acts, when Bill 106 and Bill 149 are next called as government orders, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bills without further debate or amendment, and at such time Bill 106 shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, and Bill 149 shall be ordered for third reading; and

That the standing committee on finance and economic affairs meet on Thursday, December 9, 2004, from 10 am to 12 noon and following routine proceedings for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 106; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on December 9. On that day, at not later than 5 pm, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be

deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

1510

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than Monday, December 13, 2004. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time Bill 106 shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called on that same day; and

That the orders for third reading for Bill 106 and Bill 149 shall be called concurrently; and,

That, on the day the orders for third reading are called, the time available for debate up to 5:50 pm or 9:20 pm, as the case may be, shall be divided into two equal parts, with the first part being allotted for debate on Bill 106 and the second part being allotted for debate on Bill 149, and that each part shall be further divided and apportioned equally among the recognized parties; and

That, when the time allotted for debate of both bills has expired, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of each of the bills without further debate or amendment. Any divisions required shall be deferred until all questions have been put and will be taken in succession, with the door being unlocked for 30 seconds between divisions; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Caplan has moved government notice of motion 293—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Mr Caplan.

Hon Mr Caplan: I must tell you, this is the first time that I have ever moved a time allocation motion, and I spoke to many of them when I was on the other side of the House. I want to say, and I want to be very clear, that I am very proud that our government has opened this Legislature up to much fuller debate and discussion. I want all of the members of this House to know, and I want the public of Ontario to know, that we as a government do not take time allocation lightly. After eight years—and I spoke at great length about the process of

time allocation literally being forced down the throats of the opposition and treating this Legislature as irrelevant—we're going to treat the atmosphere of this place, the people's place, in a much different way.

I want to highlight that in a couple of ways. I certainly want to talk about the history of our government over the course of the last 14 months, but I also want to contrast that with the approach taken by both of the other two parties.

Our government, the McGuinty government, has introduced 44 government bills. We've passed 22 bills, and this is the fourth time we have had to use time allocation. I agree that these two bills, Bills 106 and 149, which are the subject of this debate, are very important bills. They are budget bills. They will receive third reading debate, as I've just outlined in the time allocation motion. I want to stress that this is something that was rarely done under the Conservatives or under the New Democrats and, as you're listening to other members of the other parties talk about time allocation, I hope you will keep that in mind. I want to be clear that our government will not treat this House with the disrespect that the previous government did. Time allocation will be used, but it will be used sparingly; only on major legislation that is time-sensitive.

I wanted to compare and contrast, as I said at the outset. The modern form of time allocation, as it exists within the standing orders of the orders and proceedings under this House, was in fact set by government House leader Dave Cooke, under the New Democrats. I would say without any exaggeration that it was the New Democrats who set the trend for time allocation motions. In fact, the NDP used time allocation about 500% more than the previous Liberal government under then Premier David Peterson. There were no public hearings when the New Democrats ripped up collective agreements under the social contract. No time was allocated even for third reading debate. There were no public hearings when the New Democrats raised the gasoline tax 3.4 cents per litre. Of the 21 budget bills passed by then-Finance Minister Floyd Laughren during their five-year reign, only one was ever sent to committee for public consultation.

I want you, Speaker, and all members of this House to compare and contrast that record with the measures that are contained here. I also want to put on the record the approach we're taking and the respect with which we're treating this House as compared to the previous government under both Premier Harris and Premier Eves.

The Eves government, in the 37th Parliament, used time allocation on 83% of government bills that received royal assent—unheard of. From 1999 to 2003, the Harris-Eves government used time allocation motions on 67 of 110 bills that received royal assent—unheard of. Over 60% of legislative actions were forced down our throats, cutting off debate, allowing for no committee time and also allowing no third reading debate. Under Premier Eves, only once—only one time—did a time-allocated bill even allow for third reading debate.

These tactics were built on the legacy, as I said, that was handed down by the New Democratic Party—I fully

concede by then-House leader Dave Cooke—and I think illustrate a lack of respect for this institution. Only one quarter of all the bills the Harris-Eves government selected as their budget bills were ever sent to committee. Only one budget bill in eight years ever travelled during committee time. So I'm going to find it somewhat ironic when I hear, I expect, opposition members come and tell us that they have such trouble now with using time allocation in a very sparing way.

Speaker, I want you to understand that we on this side of the House have an abiding respect for this place and want to make sure it works effectively, and that in fact you have full debate and opportunity for committee hearings and, most importantly, third reading debate. I'm very proud that our government has changed the attitude and opened up for greater democratic support, reform and participation by all members of this Legislature.

We are sent here by the people of the various ridings we represent to do their business, and we cannot do that if governments on every occasion use a heavy hand. Of course, there have to be times, because some bills are time sensitive, when business must get done, and this is one of those occasions. I am very proud of the work the House leader for the government side, Mr Duncan, from Windsor-St Clair, has done to build a co-operative kind of atmosphere in this House.

I will be supporting this motion. I would ask all members to support this motion, and of course later, when Bills 106 and 149 do come for a vote, assuming this motion passes, I would urge all members to support the budgetary policies of this government.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): This is the mother of all time allocation motions.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Some of the people are laughing at the seriousness of the content of this time allocation. It is a budget bill which ceases and shuts down all possible debate on behalf of our constituents, not just in Durham but in Ontario, who are outraged. The minister who just spoke said they wouldn't abuse parliamentary procedure on process. What a surprise and shock. I can recall the number of promises the Liberals made and have begun a long litany of breaking each and every one of them.

1520

In the time I've got, I won't respond to the things of a trivial nature that the member who has just spoken has put on the record. In fact, their outrage should be—the finger should be pointed at themselves, because I know that they were on the record when we were in the same situation of trying to move forward with legislation that was important to restructure the province of Ontario and the economy of Ontario from what we inherited in 1995. There was serious resistance, of course, to many of the legislative initiatives. But the chicanery or the treachery of what they're doing today is one more example of not wanting to listen to the people of Ontario, and it's shocking. It's absolutely shocking when I think of the outrage they raised at the time of our government, and prior governments, using the time allocation procedure

motion. But this one here bundles a couple of budget bills, Bills 106 and 149, together. It bunches them up so that it's even more complex and perhaps diverts the real debate from the substance of the bills that are before the House.

I think I should, for those viewing today, reflect for a few moments on some of the bills. Bill 106 is the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. When you look at it, it amends the Income Tax Act to impose a tax called the health premium. Now, the viewers of Ontario should be quite aware how controversial this health tax is—or it's a health premium. In fact, it's probably going to go to the courts, and what is going to result from the courts would be a decision that—in the public sector, some of the union contracts for some time now have said that the government would pay any increase in the premium. What their arguments in court are going to be, substantively, is to say that because it's a premium and it's an increase in a premium, then in fact it should be paid for by the employer. The employer, of course, is the government. Another level could be the municipal level, or it could be the public sector in the broader sense, all of the MUSH sector: municipal, universities, schools and hospitals. We'd be expected to pay all of those premiums. To the people of Ontario, what does this health tax mean? It means about \$50 or \$60 a month on your bill. So that's one bill here.

There's the Trust Beneficiaries' Liability Act, which is another that should be paid very close attention to. So that's Bill 106; it's one of the bills. I've covered just one issue of substance within that bill.

Now, Bill 149 offers a much greater challenge. Bill 149 is a huge bundle. In my limited time of research here—because of time allocation, of course, there isn't sufficient time to bring forward the debate from the stakeholders and from my constituents, more importantly, whom I listen to rigorously and respond to as well as I can. In this one, there are a couple of other speakers who I know will be mentioning some of the punitive measures that are buried in this very, very large bill. I think Bill 149 is a large and complex finance bill, and as such, it really does a disservice to time-allocate such an important bill.

In that, I think there were 85 changes to certain credits or tax credits. I just want to mention a couple of them. One of them was for first-time home buyers, the land transfer tax. We had a policy of exempting that. For the first time, buyers were exempt from paying the land transfer tax—very, very important for young families and new families buying their first home. We felt that it was an extremely important incentive for people and home ownership, that argument. So it's clear to me that they're against young people having a chance to have their own home. That's what the substance of this is really about. They're taking that right away.

There's another very important part which the private sector were engaging in. In the debate that's ongoing for daycare and the importance for families today, we implemented—Mr Speaker, you would probably know

this—a tax credit for employers who invested in child care or providing child care services in the workplace and/or near or about or for the workplace. For those working families in Ontario, the employer was incented to provide daycare facilities through a tax credit mechanism. That has been cancelled.

We've all heard, with some anguish, about the film industry today. We had the film tax credit, which we implemented. The Liberals, during the election—one more broken promise—had promised to increase that film tax credit. So the industry, which creates jobs, tourism and promotion of the province of Ontario, is going to be denied that promise. In here, it's very clear that they're going to do nothing for that industry, which is so important to the creative culture in Ontario.

I just wanted to encourage, since we're talking about the bill, a couple of initiatives that I've taken on myself to respond to these unfair and rather onerous burdens that they're putting on the people of Ontario.

Yesterday we passed Bill 73, which is a highway safety bill really, and it had one section in it dealing with mandatory booster seats; children up to about eight years of age and, I think, about 60 pounds would have to have a booster seat. Infant seats receive a provincial retail sales tax credit. They get a credit or are exempt from paying that. I think it's Mr Arnott who has a private member's bill, and all we are asking is that the government extend this credit to working families again who are now forced by the government to buy booster seats.

There's no one in the House here who disagrees with that. In fact, the bill passed yesterday; I supported it. The one flaw is that every time they make an announcement, there's no relief for the payer. The payer of last resort, regardless of which pocket, is going to pay more. The government could offer incentives and encouragements that are missing from this bill.

Actually, I have several bills in Orders and Notices. One that I want to mention—I'll have to take a minute here in the limited time I have; I'm waiting for our whip—is the retail sales tax on \$4 meals. They were going to implement that tax on meals over \$4, which was going to be a hardship for many individuals.

Also in the limited time I have left, I have Bill 154, which I just introduced the other day. What this bill does—I'd ask members' attention on this—is attempt to modify the health expense threshold. When we pay expenses for health care, until we spend \$2,000—there's a threshold under the Income Tax Act—none of the other health-related expenses are deductible. What I'm trying to do in that bill is reduce the threshold of \$2,000, so that persons who have chiropractic, which has been delisted, optometry and physiotherapy, as well as a range of other things that could be set by regulation that are preventive, as well as self-initiated by individuals, could become encouraged or incentivized to wellness or prevention of disease and other ailments that befall people.

So this time allocation motion—I'm not responding to the minister who spoke here who was trying to deliberately point out that they're only doing it because they're

forced to do it. They're doing it in spite of the goodwill of this House and in spite of the hard work that members are prepared to do. I, for one, will be voting against this time allocation, because it's a shock. I'm amazed at what they're able to get away with, slipping it through in the last few days of the Legislature.

It's a shame that this debate is being bundled up, two bills together, very important budget measures that the people of Ontario need more time to discuss and understand before they're implemented. I can't in all good conscience, on behalf of my constituents in Durham, support time allocation on such an important measure that's going to affect the lives of hard-working Ontarians.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I listened to the honourable minister talking about a history that I think he did not understand very well, and throughout all of it, I was reminded of the bard. Of course, I always go back to the Bard, and there's a famous saying from Shakespeare in Hamlet, which is, "The lady doth protest too much." I think perhaps it is the minister who doth protest too much, because what he is trying to tell you is a history he no longer understands, a history that is not part of him any more, a history that he literally is making up as he goes.

I had the privilege and the honour of sitting in this very Legislature throughout most of the last session, and I will tell you, it was a history many times of our being forced into closure, being forced into debate by the government of the day, being told that it didn't matter what this Legislature said, that they were going to force their bill through anyway. I heard all of the ministers, particularly the government House leader today, talk time and time again about how they would never, if they were in government, invoke closure. I will tell you that I am a little appalled. I understand why governments from time to time need to invoke closure, but I am saddened all the same that this government has chosen to do so today and has chosen to do so with these two bills.

1530

There's a very good quote here from George Santayana, and I'd like to quote it because it is totally in keeping with what the minister had to say earlier in his statement: "A man's memory may almost become the art of continually varying and misrepresenting his past, according to his interests in the present."

I would tell you, the minister's interest and the government's interest at present is getting through two very controversial bills today. They have invoked closure for one of the first times in this legislative session and one of the first times in this new government's mandate. I am saddened, because these two bills are without a doubt the most controversial bills that have been brought forward in this Parliament. This Parliament has done many, many things. They have passed bills that people could say are non-consequential, bills that might have been of some importance, bills that were rushed through, but here we have two bills that follow up on the single most controversial act of this government. The single most con-

troversial act, I would suggest, without a doubt has been the imposition of a health tax after the government and the Premier, as he was not then but is now, campaigned vigorously in the last election that there would not be a health tax. He said clearly and succinctly on television, commercial after commercial after commercial, debate after debate after debate, that he would not impose a health tax and in fact that he found the whole idea of a health tax to be abhorrent.

The two bills we have before us today, Bills 106 and 149, deal in very large measure with this health tax. What is being rammed through today is, in the public's eye, the single most wrongdoing that this government has embarked upon in its very short history of 14 months. This is the most regressive budget and the most regressive set of bills that this government has dreamed up in its scant slightly more than a year's existence. It is a regressive budget and it is an unfair budget. It is an unfair health tax. It is an unfair health tax that has been, along with the other things that they did at the same time—with the Hydro shuffle; with the reduction of 12% to the various ministries; with the cause of licence fees going up in Ontario; with the delisting of services for chiropractors, for optometrists, for physiotherapists; with the clawback that they promised to give to the very poor and for children—that was all but squelched in the budget, so that families only receive some \$89, instead of the \$2,800 they had been promised. It is a budget in which the child care promises that they made during the election were not delivered. It was a budget in which the education benchmarks, which they promised to undertake because of Rozanski, were not met, where virtually no housing has been built in this province—

Hon Mr Caplan: How about the gas tax?

Mr Prue: I hear the honourable minister starting to heckle me. The minister of non-housing is heckling me.

I tell you, all this has happened—shelter allowances that were promised and finally have been delivered to the magnificent sum of some 400 families in Toronto who are lucky enough to have a shelter allowance, when they promised 32,000 families would have it. At the rate they're going, it will take 87 years to deliver on their promise. This is what has happened with their budget.

Now, in Bill 106, they talk about instituting a health tax. Well, let's look at the health tax and exactly what it does and exactly who it affects. We all know, everyone in this House knows, even Liberals will admit if you talk to them privately, that it hurts the poor far more than it hurts the rich. This is not a tax under the Income Tax Act, which, in ordinary fairness, will tax those people who earn a lot of money more than it will tax people at the bottom. This is a tax that starts to hit people who earn \$22,000 a year. A single parent with a child who earns \$22,000 a year in this province lives in poverty, according to the low-income cut-off figures of the federal government. They live in poverty, they live in destitution, but they pay a portion of the health tax. A family of four with one parent working—the mother working and the father staying at home with two kids—who earns

\$30,000 or \$35,000 a year, pays the mid-range of the health tax. We know from the low-income cut-off figures, if they live in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa or London, that they too live in poverty, but they pay \$600 in health tax. We know how much this is costing; we know how wrong it is. But this is what this government has decided to impose upon the poor, upon the destitute and upon those who cannot afford it.

They've capped it at \$900. So if you're Conrad Black, you pay \$900.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): He can't afford it any more.

Mr Prue: The Liberals are defending Conrad Black because he can't afford it any more. That's what I'm hearing. This is a man who can go out there and rip off thousands, who can find himself in financial trouble, who has millions and billions of dollars, but who, I swear, will not even pay the \$900, because as the honourable member has said, he cannot afford it any more. But some poor person working a little more than minimum wage, with family at home and earning \$20,000, will be smacked by you really well, at \$300. You're very proud of that, and you're using closure to force this through.

I will tell you, this is a very heinous thing to be doing. This is an act that deserves much more public debate.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: I'm being heckled by the member again. He obviously stands in support of Conrad Black and against tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of people who earn very little more than the minimum wage and who are about to be whacked.

This is what is being forced and rammed through the Legislature today. This is what they are doing. This is how they are using the power of closure. This is what they're doing in this Legislature on these two bills. They are taking a real run at ordinary people in Ontario and how they're going to be affected by their regressive budget.

We know what this budget is going to mean to ordinary families. We know their taxes are going up in huge proportion to what they once paid. We know that the average family is going to see the provincial portion of the taxes they pay go up by 10%, 15%, 20% or 40% more than what they paid in the past as a result of this health tax. We also know that the people who earn more than \$100,000 or more than \$200,000 are going to see their portion of tax rise only in the very small percentages of 1%, 2% or 3%. We know this is an unfair tax, but we know they're using the power of their majority here today to ensure that ordinary, small people get whacked. I want everybody to understand what this is about.

Mr Patten: "Get whacked"—that's a great expression.

Mr Prue: Yes. It's a great expression and a true expression. With all respect, it is an expression that ordinary people understand, and I wish the member opposite understood it half so well as they do.

We also have the other bill here, Bill 149. What does it do? It does a whole bunch of really great things for

ordinary people too, and it does some really great things for the super-rich and for very big corporations. What Bill 149 does most of all—its single claim to fame—is eliminate the capital tax.

I've heard Tories talk about this, and Liberals now talk about it with the same relish: This is going to help create some jobs in Ontario; this is going to help small industry meet its payrolls and make the amount of money it needs to be self-sustaining and to grow. But the reality of elimination of the capital tax is that, above all, it's going to ensure that two large segments of our commercial sector make even more money than they make today. And who are those two large sectors? The first one is the banks—the six sisters, the Big Six in Canada—and the second is the insurance companies.

1540

Let me talk about the banks first of all. I heard the CIBC and the Royal Bank announce this week that it wasn't a very good year for them. They only made merely \$2 billion in profit, each one of them, and the banks overall in Canada made \$13 billion in profit.

What the elimination of the capital tax is going to mean to them is that they're going to make even more profit, because in fact in Ontario alone, 25% of the capital tax is garnered from that industry, so an industry that makes \$13 billion in after-tax profit is going to get even more from the McGuinty government. That's what closure is being used for. So that people understand, the closure is because we feel sorry for the banks; we think that \$13 billion is not enough, that we need to make sure they make more.

I see the Minister of Finance shaking his head. He thinks they need to make more, I'm sure, because that's why he is imposing this and taking off the elimination of the capital tax.

We also know that the insurance companies, those little darlings that claim and cry that they're not making all the money they should be making, and that the rates aren't high enough and that the \$2 billion or more they're making this year, in a turnaround year, is simply not enough, are the second group that is going to benefit from the elimination of the capital tax.

That's where all this is going. That's what this government is about. That's what Bill 149, in its seminal interest, is all about. It is about eliminating a capital tax from two groups, I would suggest, that this government knows can afford it, two groups that should be paying their fair share, two groups in our society that need to be paying to keep the society going in exactly the way we have, in the past, hoped it would go: for ordinary people to have an opportunity to contribute and to take from this society, and for those who earn in the billions and billions of dollars each year to pay their fair share.

The elimination of the capital tax will cost \$1 million this year only, because it's just being implemented, \$40 million next year and \$110 million the year after that. That's more than the city of Toronto will need to meet how much money is needs in terms of the shortfall. That's what's being taken out, that's what's happening as

a result of the elimination of the tax laws and the revenue share to Ontario.

The second thing this Bill 149 does is, it ends the PST on a whole range of programs, and the one that's particularly vexatious and troubling to me is ending the PST rebates for handicapped drivers and their families. It ends a rebate that was instituted many years ago so that when a handicapped driver or a family who needs to equip a vehicle so that he or she may drive around or ferry members of their family from the house to school or to social events or to doctors' appointments—that is being eliminated under this bill.

Regular listeners to this program will know that I stood in this House several times over the case of Mr Jason Chenier, who lives in eastern Ontario, and what was happening to him as a result of the government misinformation about this bill and what was on the Web site and what they were doing. This bill will ensure that the government's plans under the budget will come to pass, because the money will finally be eliminated, the money that was allocated will go instead to the March of Dimes, it will be means tested and it ignores the great many Ontarians who are of modest or middle incomes who will no longer be able to equip vehicles they need for themselves and for their families in order to meet their daily lifestyles.

This bill also does other things. The PST rebate on energy efficiency is being done away with. I think this is very short-sighted. Even Toronto Hydro, in the last couple of days or weeks, has come out with a program to get rid of beer fridges. They understand that the program on the PST rebate for energy efficiency for such old clunkers as beer fridges is a good idea. This government does not. In fact, it takes away the PST rebate and did so effectively July 2004.

This bill also does one good thing and, perhaps by omission, several other things that are not so good around the securities task. One of the 14 recommendations of the finance committee looking into the Ontario Securities Commission was the extension of civil liability in case of misrepresentations in secondary trades under the Securities Act, and this is accomplished in this bill. I commend the government on this one point, for doing the right thing. But I have to ask the government: There were 14 recommendations in total; 13 of them are not in this act. If the government thought that this was a good suggestion, why are the other ones not there? Why is there no separation of the adjudicative function from the policy and investigations function? Why is there no direct order for restitution? Why is there nothing in there about conflicts of interest? Why is there nothing in there about self-regulating agencies? Why is there nothing in there about dealers' associations?

I would suggest that the government, in putting forward this bill and acting in such a quiet and unassuming way under the Securities Act, is paying little more than lip service to what the committee has suggested the minister do. Quite frankly, it is a shame, because I think some very valuable work was done by members of all parties.

Last but not least, section 9 talks about the phase-outs of all the government programs that ordinary Ontarians have come to rely on to pay for this largesse to the banks and to the insurance companies—and I guess to try to get the government out of the hole it finds itself in, in terms of finances. Section 9 talks, quite frankly, in terms of the child care tax incentive and how this is going to be eliminated. This is a government that I have heard on every platform, including the Premier speaking last night, speak about how important child care incentives are, how important it is for people to have an opportunity for their children to be in quality child care. This is the tax incentive for businesses across this province that say, “Yes, we want to have child care on our facility. We want to be able to look after children while their parents work in our factory, work in our office, work in our educational institution”—wherever that might be—and we want to have a child care facility on-site.”

There was and will be a child care incentive to do that until this bill is passed. When this bill passes, the days of companies and progressive individuals wanting to have child care facilities on-site will no longer be subsidized in any way by the province of Ontario. That is a shame, because it is probably the single greatest thing that an employer can do for his or her employees, to make sure that those employees are not disadvantaged because of the lack of quality child care. It is the single greatest incentive that they can give to parents who are forced to stay at home, who are forced in some cases to go on social assistance, who are forced to take non-productive jobs. If there is quality child care in some of our greater institutions, in some of our more productive workplaces, this would be an incentive for people, ordinary people, to go back to work, to contribute to the society and to be assured that their children were well cared for. This is eliminated in sections 4 and 5 of this bill.

If we look at section 6 of this bill, this is the educational technology tax credit, which was given to ordinary companies who wanted to have an opportunity to hire our best and our brightest to look after technology. In order to offset the monies to hire these people, to train them and to make sure they were fully utilized within the corporation, there was an educational technology tax credit which, upon the passage of this bill, will be history, so that we can no longer look to our best and brightest coming out of colleges and universities, and companies will no longer have a technology tax credit which will allow them to hire those people and to develop technology right here in Ontario.

We have another change, which is section 7 and section 42.1 of this very bill, which talks about electricity supply. This is a tax that will no longer—I’ve dealt with this a little bit, about the PST rebate on energy efficiency. In fact, it was an electricity supply which will allow for companies who are developing alternate forms to be able to have a tax rebate. This is taken away, and certainly will impact some of the newer or changing technologies that the government, at all times, stands in this House and says it wishes to embrace. This is a bill which will ensure

that people who want to go along this route and who are expecting some type of subsidy will no longer have that.

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Last but not least, and I’ve dealt with this at some length, are the capital tax provisions of sections 30, 32 and 34, which will allow for a windfall, a boon, a huge impact on our financial sector, particularly the banks and the insurance corporations. These are the people who will see the overwhelming amount of money that they are presently having to spend for the upkeep of this province diverted and going, in fact, into their own coffers. What they have paid in the past will no longer be their share. They will be divorced from having to contribute to this Ontario, divorced from having to contribute to the programs which benefit ordinary people in this Ontario, and in fact will find that their shareholders and those who have a lot of money already have even more.

This is a very disappointing bill. It’s very disappointing not only that it was introduced, but it is disappointing that it is today the subject of a closure motion. I am not surprised, I have to say, Mr Speaker. I am not surprised that this government has invoked closure on these two bills. They are hugely contentious. They want them out of the way. They want them passed. They want them to be law before we come back here again in mid-February. They do not want this to be the albatross hanging around their neck. They think that these bills, if passed, will simply be forgotten by ordinary people. But I will tell you, that is not likely to happen, because ordinary people will remember what this government stood for, what this government promised, in the days and weeks leading up to the last election. They will remember that they were promised a plethora of new programs that they hungered for, that they dreamed of, that they believed were possible. They will also remember that this government, throughout that period of time, promised them that there would be no new tax increase.

They are not going to see that plethora of new government programs. In fact, they are going to see that they lose very cherished programs, cherished programs like optometry, cherished programs like physiotherapy, cherished programs like chiropractic or child care or educational technology or electrical supply.

They will see at the same time that they are in all ways less well off than they were before these programs were taken away. Their taxes and the taxes of ordinary people, those people who earn under \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year as an individual, will invariably go up as a result of the health tax. At the same time, those corporations, those banks, those insurance companies that make \$13 billion in profits this year will see a corresponding reduction in the amount of taxes they pay to this province.

If this is what this government stands for, then this is your legacy. This is what you are doing. This is what you are imposing today. This is what you are forcing through the Legislature because you have the votes to do it. This will be remembered, I think, for a long time as one of your worst hours.

I ask the government to reconsider. There is still time to withdraw the closure debate. There is still time to

rethink what you are doing. There is still time to look at alternatives, and I know you need alternatives. We know you need alternatives, and we know that the finances of this province are not in the shape you expected them to be in when you assumed power, although you should have known that. But, you know, they're not. They are not in the shape that you expected. But the way you are going about this, the way you are imposing this particular bill today and the closure, what the contents of Bills 106 and 149 contain, are not good for the citizens of Ontario. I ask you to rethink them. If you need the money, please find it elsewhere. Please do not do this to the people of Ontario. And for the sake of the Legislature, for the sake of this venerable institution, which survived eight brutal years under the former government—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Hey, hey. Just when you were on a roll.

Mr Prue: I'm on a roll still—eight brutal years under the former government that invoked closure so many times, please do not follow in this track, especially in bills that are of such enormous consequence to—

Hon Mr Caplan: What about the social contract?

Mr Prue: I wasn't here, and neither were you, so don't talk of things of which you know nothing. I was actually mayor then.

Hon Mr Caplan: Well, OK.

Mr Prue: All right. You know, I'm not going to get into a debate with the member, although he would welcome a debate, I am sure, because it gets him a little bit of television time, of which he is most undeserving.

I would just like to close with this statement: This government can do a whole lot better. I implore them to try to do the right things and not the wrong things. I implore them, as Santayana said, not to use history and to forget everything about their history—

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): George Santayana?

Mr Prue: Yes, yes. Yes, it was George.

Interjection: As opposed to the rock group.

Mr Prue: No, no. You did hear it? You did hear the quote? OK. Yes, it is George—to not remember the history in a maligned way, but the history in the correct way, not to try to use it to their advantage, but in fact to try to use it for the benefit of ordinary Ontarians.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill. It is a time allocation bill, but certainly I remember over my last term in opposition, I think virtually every bill that went through this Legislature was done on time allocation. When I look at these particular bills that we're dealing with, these are bills that I believe will accomplish so much good for Ontario that it is time they were implemented for the citizens who need what will arise out of them.

I hear comments from other members about things that it takes away. I would suggest that if there actually were a Chicken Little, he or she would get elected to this Legislature on the opposition side, because it sounds like Liberals are taking away everything, when in reality what the Liberals are doing is replacing programs that have not

worked well or have not worked fairly with better programs that will better serve the people of Ontario. We need to look at the total picture, not just the inactive sections that are being removed.

It is important that we pass this legislation. There are so many factors in it that I think will truly change the quality of life for people in Ontario.

For Ontarians, our budget—we tend to focus on numbers, and the media report numbers. The numbers are government programs just expressed in number form, but in fact they direct and dictate what programs we will deliver.

I can think, for example, of the health care tax that has been criticized, and certainly I had my share of phone calls shortly after our budget about the health care tax. The calls have slowed down and in fact have stopped, because the people are realizing what is coming as a benefit from it. When there is an announcement made that there will be additional full-time nurses hired in the hospitals across Ontario, the people realize that the quality of care will be improved. The previous government described nurses as Hula Hoop workers. We describe them as an essential part of the health care system. We're looking at 8,000 more full-time jobs for nurses in Ontario, home care for an additional 95,000 Ontarians, long-term-care beds, nine new MRI and CT scan sites, and we can go on and on—the seniors' drug program, \$3 billion into the drug plan, and growing at 15% a year.

The issue became that life can be a compromise, but if you don't have your health, you have nothing, so from our government there is no compromise on health care. We did what we had to do to continue to deliver quality health care in this province and to restore the cuts and restore the erosion that had taken place, as the previous speaker said, over the last terrible, brutal eight years in this province.

It is important for the people of Ontario to see what's implemented; it is important for them to know that this budget will improve. I think it is equally bad for a budget—or a non-budget, if we're talking about the Magna budget, best described as a non-budget. It is important that what is in the budget is delivered. To do otherwise is misleading to the public.

I think back to the spring of 2003. The previous government toured Ontario hospitals, promising funding for capital expansion. I can think of my community, where a government member from a nearby riding came with a massive cheque—well, it wasn't a real cheque; it was a big piece of cardboard and plastic that had numbers on it—and said, "We're now funding Quinte Health Care for \$37.2 million for an expansion."

1600

Now, I have seen governments and organizations that do cheque presentations, whether it's a presentation to the United Way or whether it's the government funding of any program. When an organization comes up with this big cheque and says, "Here's the money," there is an obligation, folks, that there be a real cheque with real dollars that accompany it. But it turns out that this cheque

that was used at Quinte Health Care was used at virtually every hospital across Ontario. You could describe it as a rubber cheque in the sense that it stretched from one end of Ontario to the other. You could describe it as a rubber cheque in other terms too.

In fact, the previous government, during the spring of 2003, promised to fund—well, they didn't promise to fund; they said, "We are funding." The cheque said, "We are funding expansion in the hospitals of between \$4 billion and \$5 billion." They knew they couldn't deliver on that. They knew the budget situation that they were in. They were keeping it a secret from the public. That was most unfortunate, that that tack was taken. There was a total inability, had they been re-elected, to have made good on all of those cheques that they presented. In fact, folks, when they held up that cheque, they were saying, "We're giving the hospitals the money today," and they weren't. They were not.

I know that my community came together and they fundraised their portion very, very quickly—a wonderful group of individuals. They went to industry, commercial enterprises and individual citizens and raised \$21 million as their portion for it, in the belief that the previous government had given them \$37.2 million. In fact, they had given them absolutely nothing. So it was a misleading announcement that took place across the province. They hadn't put the money in the budget. There were no dollars for these expansions. I know that in the case of Quinte Health Care, our government recognizes a need for the expansion and remains committed to funding it. I think it's unfortunate that the citizens of Ontario were used in this ploy to gather votes, but the people weren't fooled.

Let's look at what is going to be accomplished by this bill. Certainly, the lead item that I referred to previously and that others have talked about is the Ontario health premium that will enhance health care significantly in Ontario. We know that if the province is to thrive, it is absolutely vital that everyone in this province thrives. So we need to keep the economy strong and healthy.

We are allowing for northern Ontario—and I had the pleasure of being in northern Ontario last week, where absolutely wonderful individuals face challenges. We've got a little bit of ice and snow here today, and they've had it for quite some time. But what a marvellous group of individuals who believe in their area, believe in their community. Our government is going to allow them to purchase grow bonds so that they can invest in their community. They, like all of us, want employment in their area so that their children can graduate from school and stay in the community where there is that strong sense of being.

We have taken the advice that previous governments didn't. We are going to eliminate the capital tax, because it is very clear that if we're going to attract industry into Ontario, this is an archaic form of taxation that does not do that, and it should not remain.

The apprenticeship training program tax credit: long overdue. We have created a climate in this world, I guess,

where people believe that the best jobs are white-collar, and I've got the sense that white-collar parents want their children going to white-collar employment. All too often, parents who are blue-collar want their children to go into white-collar employment. There is no disgrace whatsoever in the apprenticeship training programs. Any organization, whether it's a company or a province, is the sum of all of its parts, and everyone in this province plays a very, very vital role, but we're facing a challenge in the skilled trades. We're facing challenges in attracting young people into them. The introduction of this apprenticeship training tax credit will encourage employers to take and hire apprentices. It increases it, actually, by 30% tax credit, which will cause them to say, "We will invest the time in these young people"—they don't necessarily have to be young—"to contribute to the economy." I think that's a great move on our part.

The Ontario commercialization investment funds program: Ontario is the centre of a great deal of world-class research. Right in my own community I have a company called Bioniche, which is one of the world's leading companies in research. But once the research is completed, we need to get the commercial benefits of that, which means we need to make investments in production facilities. It is wrong for us to do the research and then see the item produced in another country. It must be produced here, because that's the profit component of it. The Ontario commercialization investment funds program will allow for investment in new operations that are going to take advantage of the research that is done here and will allow the production and profits to remain in this country, all of which benefits our health care system and our education system—a wonderful initiative.

The seniors' tax credit will be increased for the first time, I think, in 12 years. We're going to increase the seniors' tax credit so that seniors, who have certainly served Ontario and our country well, will get some additional tax benefits on their homes to assist them in staying in them. It's a shame that it has gone 12 years before an increase took place.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): We gave them a credit last year. You guys took it away, Ernie.

Mr Parsons: I believe the people voted that they felt that was not a fair system of tax credit. That was part of the platform. That was a promise kept. If you want to criticize, you need to criticize the electorate, I would suggest to members on the other side.

Development charges are going to be extended to help fund GO Transit. Toronto is a marvellous city that continues to grow and expand, but at times driving in the morning, I'm convinced that the Don Valley and the 401 are really—I think the advantage of the 401 in the mornings is that it congregates all the automobiles in one specific location. The Don Valley Parkway is probably aptly named at rush hour; it is in fact a parkway. The most efficient, economical way is mass transit. We're going to allow this to continue, so that development

taking place outside Toronto will be able to fund the GO Transit lines to be extended there and serve it, rather than adding 800 or 900 more cars to our highway system. People will be attracted, and I mean strongly attracted, to the GO Transit railway that's going to be located there. I think that's wonderful.

Waiving court fees for needy litigants is also included here. Justice denied is probably one of the most horrendous things that can happen to a citizen in Ontario. There are individuals in this province who simply have had an injustice done to them but cannot afford to go through the process to see justice done. Our bill will allow for the fact that there are certain individuals who require access to the justice system. We will not allow the lack of money to bar someone from justice.

I am very proud of this bill. I wish it didn't have to go through time allocation; I wish the other side didn't block it.

There is so much good in these bills that I am very proud to be a part of this government, to see the quality of life improved for Ontarians.

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to rise—well, I'm not that pleased, actually—to debate yet—

Mr Parsons: Which is it?

Mr Hudak: Well, I'm not. I no doubt enjoy the honour of having the opportunity to be here in the Legislature to speak and to address bills and to convey the concerns of the constituents of the great riding of Erie-Lincoln. But I'm certainly not pleased to have to rise for the second consecutive day to address yet another time allocation motion from the government. The big hammer has come down.

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Mr Parsons: How can you even say that?

Mr Hudak: Well, every time I've spoken this week in debate, it has been to a time allocation motion.

Mr Parsons: You spoke to and supported every time allocation bill.

Mr Hudak: I don't know if what the member says is true, but if he wants to throw quotes back and forth, I'd be pleased to do so.

Mr Parsons: I have to go now.

Mr Hudak: Now they flee. Where's the white flag?

Is there one by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal? Let's see; it's a thick volume. I only have, I think, volume one. It's like the *Encyclopædia Britannica* of opposition to time allocation motions.

Mr Yakabuski: It's volume 1 in a series. There's a lot more.

Mr Hudak: It's volume 1 of a series where members spoke about time allocation motions and gave the—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: I do. I'm stopping at C with Colle. Ah, here we go. I'm in the Cs. Under the Cs, the member for Don Valley West, on November 21, 2001, said, "How could it ever be a pleasure to speak to that, when that's the normal course of action and when this Legislature is shut down for the very purpose it was meant for, which

was to discuss important matters?" The Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal—

Mr Yakabuski: The current minister.

Mr Hudak: Look at this. This is ironic or a coincidence. At the beginning of his remarks on November 21, 2001, he said, "I usually start off my remarks by saying it's a pleasure to speak to something"—that's rather funny, isn't it?"—"on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, but it really isn't. This is yet another closure motion, a gag order...."

Wow. A gag order is how the member for Don Valley West—

Hon Mr Caplan: East.

Mr Hudak: Sorry. East is east and west is west, and I apologize for getting them mixed up.

Mr Yakabuski: They might change it anyway, because if it suits their fancy, they'll change east to west.

Mr Hudak: Maybe they will.

Mr Yakabuski: It really matters little to them. They could change east to west if it suits their political purposes, Tim.

Mr Hudak: That's true.

I think I've lost my point here. I was going to say it's a pleasure to rise to speak, but it's not. It echoes the comments of the member for Don Valley East, one of many in the first volume—this is merely A to C—of Liberal members who have spoken out against these types of motions. Yet what do we see when they get on that side of the House? Ramming bills through the Legislature via time allocation motions. Certainly, they promised one thing when they were campaigning and they're doing something completely different now when they are in office.

Mr Yakabuski: If we're going to be running copies of votes on their hypocrisy, I've got to call my broker and get some shares in those paper companies. We're going to be printing forever.

Mr Hudak: It's rare to get heckled by one of your colleagues, but it is entertaining.

It's regrettable because I've been listening to the debate and what my colleagues opposite on the government side have said, but I haven't had a good reason why they're bringing in time allocation on these particular pieces of legislation. In fact, I think we've been clear. We're opposing bills—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Because they increase taxes.

Hon Mr Caplan: Reconsider.

Mr Hudak: It's pretty clear. There are tax hike bills here before us in this two-for-one deal. I guess they've been doing so many time allocation motions they're getting more efficient at it.

Mr Yakabuski: I think they went to the House leaders' meeting and said, "Supersize it."

Mr Hudak: They have supersized this time allocation motion by doing a special two-for-one deal and time-allocating two bills at once. Then they're calling for them to be voted on concurrently. It should be interesting to

see if Dalton McGuinty votes yea on one and nay on the other or back and forth or flip-flops on the votes.

Mr Yakabuski: He'll probably want to vote twice and vote different ways.

Mr Hudak: He may vote different ways each time, because certainly on the topic of flip-flops, as I said during members' statements today, Dalton McGuinty can perform flip-flops at Olympian skill levels. In fact, today we awarded the gold medal for flip-flops to Premier McGuinty, who has broken some I think now, we calculate, 38 or 39—I think probably more; it's been hard to keep up with the broken promises.

Mr Yakabuski: He's the current world record holder.

Mr Hudak: He is. He is the Donovan Bailey of broken promises, the world's fastest man at breaking campaign promises.

Yet once again Dalton McGuinty decried the use of time allocation measures, but here I find myself for the second consecutive day of debate responding to a time allocation motion. Certainly, it was with regret last night that I addressed a time allocation motion and with similar regret today that I must do so again.

There are some very, very unfortunate, ill-considered tax hikes as part of these bills. Another thing I've spoken about in this House is—and I have not yet heard a good response from members opposite, and I regret I probably won't because they're trying to ram these bills through before Christmas—as to why the mean-spirited and vindictive move of severing off the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and taking Muskoka out of the definition of northern Ontario.

Mr Yakabuski: Scrooge Bartolucci.

Mr Hudak: Maybe it is Scrooge Bartolucci here, but it's part of Dalton McGuinty's makeup, I think. You look at the OMA negotiations, and there's no doubt that Health Minister Smitherman really staked his reputation on his contract that he'd offered to the OMA. He was out selling it as the deal of century, that this was going to restructure health care, and speaking with some enthusiasm that the doctors were going to say that they agreed with it. But after, I think—and probably one of the most bungled files in recent memory—the doctors voted some 60% against the deal that Premier McGuinty and his health minister had put on the table. And I guess if I have to choose who's right, who knows what's best for health care, between a Premier who breaks all kinds of promises, who says one thing and does another, and the medical professionals in Ontario, I'll side with the medical professions every time.

So back to the vindictiveness. Then, all of a sudden, the response of the Liberal government, seeing their offer voted down democratically—60%, I say to the member for Peterborough. That's significant. That wasn't a squeaker; that was solid. Three out of five doctors surveyed said they didn't like this deal. And what was the response of the government? They did a sneak attack. There was supposed to be a breakfast meeting, I think, with the chair of the OMA and the health minister to discuss the next steps. All of a sudden—this sneak

attack—they tried to torpedo the OMA. They threw this bomb of a deal back on the table and said take it or leave it. They didn't even tell the Premier it was going to be there, and the Premier was there. They were saying take it or leave it. No more negotiations; that's it, no more. They've got to take this deal or leave it—hardball. There was conciliation, and then, all of a sudden, it was hardball. Then, a day later, it was softball again. It was, "Well, I think we're going to continue our conversations on the phone. We've spoken, and 24 hours later we're going to speak." And then today, they're going back to the bargaining table. I'm happy that they're going back to the bargaining table.

Mr Yakabuski: My wife would call him a flitzebogen. He's all over the place.

Mr Hudak: German?

Mr Yakabuski: Yes.

Mr Hudak: Which means he's all over the place. I don't know if German is a translated language in the Legislature, but as my colleague for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke cleverly puts it, he's all over the place. He is conducting health care policy on the back of a napkin from a sushi restaurant. It's the only way I can explain it—negotiating with the Ontario Medical Association while he's at war with the Ontario Hospital Association, and while the health minister is picking on the workers in the hospital, whether it's cafeteria workers, janitorial staff or nurses, saying they make too much money. He's opening up a three-front war on the health care file.

My colleague the member for Nepean has called upon him to go back to the table. Other colleagues here have said the same thing: the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and our leader, John Tory, said the same thing. They have finally taken our advice. But my goodness, they have been all over the place on this issue of negotiating with the OMA. I mean, health care is probably the single most important file that a government would have to deal with. Dalton McGuinty stakes a lot of what's remaining of his reputation on the health care file, and they're flying by the seat of their pants.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: You are. You've had three or four different policies in about a 48-hour time frame on the OMA. They are conducting health care policy on the back of a napkin in a sushi restaurant. It's highly, highly regrettable, and I think it's ultimately going to be unsuccessful. I don't see how you can bring change to the health care system, as they purport to want to do, by beating up on doctors, hospital boards and hospital workers. I don't understand how that strategy is going to be successful. Maybe I'll be proved wrong, but it certainly runs counter to what they promised they would do.

Speaking about running counter to what you promised, I find myself for the second consecutive legislative day speaking to a time allocation motion, this one, as my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said, a super-sized allocation motion, a two-for-one deal, two bills coming through at the same time. It's highly regrettable the government has resorted to these tactics. I have not

heard a reason why they have to jam this legislation through without full debate in this Legislature. Maybe I will, but it is regrettable.

I hope my colleagues opposite will support us and vote down this time allocation motion and get back to debating the bill.

1620

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Let me begin this debate by saying that I'm not surprised the government is here bringing in a time allocation motion to shut down debate on these two tax bills, and I'm not surprised because, frankly, the components of the two tax bills are very controversial, have got the government into a lot of hot water and have generated a lot of negative feedback for the government. I'm sure the government is going to be quite happy to be able to shut this down and not highlight the public's concern any more.

There are a number of people who, when they saw their health tax coming off their pay in July, were certainly very angry and contacted MPPs' offices then, many of them thinking the bill had actually been passed. Now people who have been watching the debate on Bill 106 have recognized that in fact this went into effect even though the tax bill itself had not been passed by this House. That now gives them an opportunity to get angry, frustrated and mad one more time about the government bringing in a new health tax that is very regressive at a time when the Premier had said very clearly to the public that he would not increase taxes and would not bring in a premium.

As I start, I say that I'm not surprised the government has come forward with a time allocation motion, because much of what is in the two tax bills before us is of great controversy and will be very negative for modest- and middle-income families. The government does not want to continue to highlight how negative these things are, hence the motion to shut it all down.

I want to deal more specifically with Bill 106. Of the three bills that are being dealt with in it, let me deal with the first one, which is the second-most controversial of the package, and that has to do with proposed changes the government wanted to bring to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act.

Specifically, the government proposed an amendment to section 54 of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994, to remove the requirement that a person have a sufficient supply of forest resources before the Minister of Natural Resources is permitted to issue a forest resource processing facility licence to the person.

The point of that being written into the Crown Forest Sustainability Act in the first place in 1994, which was done by our government, was to ensure there would be sufficient timber to supply a mill, and that that timber should be supplied to a mill in the community and not be allowed to be taken to Quebec, or sent to the US or sent to mills that were not located in nearby communities. That was the whole point of the matter.

The amendment the Minister of Natural Resources proposed to bring in through this tax bill would have

done away with that requirement to ensure that there was sufficient supply for a mill to operate, that you just couldn't get a licence and decide to send that timber somewhere else, perhaps to another mill that you owned or perhaps to buyers in Quebec or in the United States.

Of course, that provision in this bill didn't get a lot of coverage, because the main point in Bill 106 was the new health tax that people have reacted so negatively to. I want to commend my colleague Gilles Bisson, who is our critic for natural resources, and both IWA and CEP, who represent many workers in the forestry sector, particularly in northern Ontario, who made it their business to start letting communities know about this particular proposed change and to try to get municipalities to respond by way of resolution to the government to encourage them to back off of this really silly and stupid change.

Joe Hanlon, for example, went before the council in Alberton, before Reeve Mike Hammond, and said the following. I'm just going to quote some of his letter, if I might. It's dated October 27, 2004:

"On behalf of members of the IWA-Canada, Local 2693 (Steelworkers), I am writing to bring to your attention and express our concern to Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFSA), 1994.

"We are asking ourselves how this government can introduce such an important change" to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act "through a bill that does not reflect the ministry it is intended for.

"By repealing the present subsection 54(1) of the CFSA and substituting it with the proposed language, sawmills will be able to operate and open without having any timber commitment. We should be asking ourselves and demanding accountability from the government on the following:

"(a) How will this change affect communities that presently have sawmills that operate with timber commitments?

"(b) Why would we want to allow for mega-mills, as done in BC, causing the closure of present community sawmills?

"(c) Is this the beginning of allowing raw logs to cross international borders, even though we have been successful in the NAFTA rulings?

"(d) Is the present Ontario government changing positions in regards to the softwood lumber issue as did the BC government?

"(e) Can our northern Ontario communities who rely on their wood supply for their viability afford such change to the CFSA?

"(f) As northerners should we not expect that our local resources would continue to provide local jobs to sustain local communities?

"These are just a few of our concerns. These are the real concerns of your taxpaying population who derive an income from our northern Ontario forests.

"It is ... rare that a change to the CFSA of this magnitude be considered or suggested by a government

without public consultation or through a bill that deals with budgets measures. We encourage you to lobby your government officials and demand the opportunity for public hearings."

As a result of the actions of both IWA and CEP and of my colleague Gilles Bisson, who was in a number of communities to raise this issue—communities like Timmins, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Kirkland Lake, North Bay, Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie—the Minister of Natural Resources has now been forced to withdraw this particular provision from this bill. Good for my colleague Mr Bisson. Good for those members of CEP and IWA who rely on the forestry industry for their livelihood and knew full well this would be very detrimental.

It is a good thing that this has been removed, but it wasn't removed as a result of public hearings on the bill, which we should have had; it was removed because of the efforts of those people who were involved in the industry, who knew how negative it could be and who went to a number of municipalities, lobbied them hard, got a lot of media coverage and forced the Minister of Natural Resources to back down. And I hope that we will not see another iteration of this, a similar provision, in any other bill before this House.

Now, the second really odious detail in Bill 106, of course, has to do with the changes being made to the Income Tax Act to bring in the new health tax. Let me spend the rest of my time talking about the new health tax. I heard the government—

Hon Mr Caplan: You only have 16 minutes.

Ms Martel: I can say a lot in 16 minutes and quote Mr McGuinty a fair bit, Mr Caplan. Just you wait and see.

I heard a number of Liberals during the debate say the reason the government had to bring in the new health tax was because they were taken by surprise by the size of the deficit left by the former Conservative government. They were taken by surprise. They had no idea there was such a large deficit looming out there that they were going to have to deal with when they were elected in government.

I take you back to comments made by Gerry Phillips, Liberal finance critic, in June 2003, when he was down in the estimates committee, estimates for the Ministry of Finance, dealing with the March budget. Mr Phillips asked some very pointed questions that are now on public record through Hansard about that budget and about the size of the deficit he saw in that particular budget.

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Let me just quote Mr Phillips a little bit. On June 3, 2003, in the estimates committee, he said, "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So, Minister"—Minister Ecker—"I say to you again, I do think your budget is high risk." Well, he was right, and he knew about that deficit.

But he also said a number of other things about deficit, because I heard Liberals talk during the debate about, "Oh, we have all this deficit now coming from hospitals and universities and colleges. It's going to be on our books, and we've got to deal with that. We didn't know it

was coming." Well, here's what Mr Phillips said on June 7, 2002, to Treasury Watch: "Billions of dollars of off-book debt are piling up on school boards, hospitals, universities, colleges and nursing home owners. The province has guaranteed to pay the principal and interest, but there is at least \$5 billion of fairly new debt that does not show up on the province's books," which of course was going to show up. He knew that and therefore could not say that he was surprised by what happened after the election.

He also knew about savings, because he and the Liberals knew there weren't going to be savings found in the budget and they should not have been making the election promises they were, using savings that were not to be had. Here's what he said on June 3 in estimates about savings: "There's \$800 million of unidentified savings. You just said, 'We're going to find \$800 million of savings,' but you haven't identified any of them. The normal savings is \$200 million, so that's four times what you normally have."

So you see, during the course of the estimates, Mr Phillips, a well-respected member of this Legislature, finance critic for the Liberal Party for a long time, knew full well and made a point of pointing out during the estimates that there was a significant risk in the order of \$5 billion—a \$5-billion potential deficit. He knew that, but that didn't stop the Liberals from making 231 promises during the election.

Mr Phillips wasn't the only one who knew there was a deficit, because on August 12, 2003, Mr Kwinter, also a long-serving member of the Liberal Party who is now in cabinet, told Canadian Press that there was a \$5-billion deficit as well. So you see, of course the Liberals knew that there was a significant deficit. Of course Liberal candidates knew that there was a significant deficit. They knew that before the election, but that didn't stop them from making 231 promises. I can only assume that when the Liberal candidates made the promises they did, they didn't have any intention of keeping them—none at all. Knowing the level of the deficit, knowing the risks that were coming, knowing what was going to come on to the province's books in terms of deficits from hospitals, colleges and universities, knowing what was in the budget—and Mr Phillips did—the Liberals should never have made the promises they did. I think they did, knowing full well they weren't going to be able to keep them, but were so anxious to win the election, they would have promised the sun, the moon and the stars, and frankly did, with 231 promises.

It's really hard to accept hearing Liberals say now, "Oh, my goodness, we have to bring in this new health care tax because we didn't know the level of the deficit and we were taken by surprise." Not true; not true at all.

Let's deal with some of the broken promises associated with this new health tax. During the election, Mr McGuinty said very clearly, "I will not increase your taxes." Not only did he say it, he appeared on stage with representatives from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and signed a pledge—a big pledge, a big photo oppor-

tunity—with him smiling away into the camera saying, “I will not raise your taxes.” I’m sure there were other Liberal candidates who were there as well. There he was, smiling into the camera saying, “I will not raise your taxes,” and signing on the dotted line.

Howard Hampton was asked to sign that, too, but he knew we were going to have to raise taxes and he would have no part of it. But that didn’t stop Dalton McGuinty with a big photo op, smiling into the cameras. And there we were, not months but weeks after that was all over, and here comes the government with bills to increase your taxes. First they took off the cap on hydro, so that’s going to raise what people have to pay, but then they came forward with this bill, which is the single-biggest income tax increase in the history of the province. So there’s the first broken promise with respect to this health tax.

The second broken promise with respect to the new health tax has to do with the fact of a health premium. You see, before the election, Mr McGuinty was very clear that his Liberal government would never bring in a health care premium. It was the previous Liberal government under David Peterson that did away with the premium—before I got here, as a matter of fact. But there was Mr McGuinty during the first leadership race of the Conservative Party. Here’s his quote on Canada News-Wire, January 25, 2002—because during the leadership debate Mr Stockwell and Mr Eves had just put forward their proposal for a new health care premium. Here is what Mr McGuinty had to say in reply: “Ontario Liberals oppose the return of OHIP premiums because they are a tax hike on working families, says leader Dalton McGuinty.

“Tory leadership candidates Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell may want to raise taxes, by charging families an additional \$1,000 a year for health care. I do not,” McGuinty said today.”

Mr Yakabuski: Did he speak with conviction when he said that?

Ms Martel: I’m not done yet. Let me finish.

“Families are already paying for health care with their taxes. Pay more for health care, pay twice for health care, but get less health care—that’s the Tory plan. It’s certainly not the Liberal plan,” said Mr McGuinty with such conviction.

There’s more: “If Eves were Premier, you’d pay at least three times: with your taxes, with your premiums, and, if you have the cash, out of your pocket to get premium service,” he said.

“Instead of looking for ways to make Ontarians pay more, we must look for better ways to invest the precious dollars Ontarians already give us, so they get improved health care.”

That was Dalton McGuinty, January 25, 2002. My, my, how times have changed.

Here he says, “If Eves were Premier, you’d pay ... three times.” Look, McGuinty is the Premier and you are paying three times: You pay for health care out of your general taxes; you pay for health care again through the

new health tax; and now, if you have some money left over in your pocket, you might be able to pay for chiropractic care, an eye exam, and, next April, for physiotherapy. That’s if you have the money in your pocket to pay for those services, which this Liberal government delisted from OHIP.

Never mind Ernie Eves, because Ernie Eves didn’t even actually do this. It was Dalton McGuinty who brought in the new health tax and is now making Ontarians pay, not once, not twice but three times for health care services, instead of investing the money that we already get into health care services.

Better yet, here was Mr McGuinty saying that if Chris Stockwell or Ernie Eves were elected, they were going to charge families an additional \$1,000 a year for health care. Well, guess what? Under the regressive health care tax imposed by this government, many Ontario families have the pleasure of paying \$1,200 per family for additional health care—not the \$1,000 that Mr McGuinty was critical of in January 2002; they’re paying \$1,200 a year under your new health tax.

So, talk about a broken promise, talk about a flip-flop, talk about taking modest- and middle-income Ontarians to the cleaners: This Liberal government has done it all with Bill 106. Not only was it a broken promise, but your new health tax severely impacts on modest- and middle-income families in a way that even Ernie Eves and Chris Stockwell didn’t dream of.

Let’s take a look at how regressive this health care tax really is. You have a single mom making \$30,000 a year. What is the percentage of the tax increase for her as she’s trying to sustain her two kids? Well, she will now pay an astounding 24% more in provincial income tax, thanks to the Dalton McGuinty new health tax. A single mom with \$30,000 income, which is nothing to write home about in Ontario any more, now pays an additional 24% in provincial income tax. Someone who earns over \$200,000 a year, a single individual—how much do you think he or she pays? He or she pays a measly 3% more in provincial income tax as part of this scheme brought in by the Liberals. I ask you, where is the fairness in that? Where is the fairness in going after a single mom at \$30,000 and making her pay 24% more in provincial income tax, and someone who is bringing in \$200,000 a year only pays 3% more? That’s how regressive this tax really is. No wonder you want to get rid of this bill and get it away from the public radar.

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Let’s look at how some of these other folks have already benefited and what it really means. You see, the person at \$200,000 already got a lot of benefit. They’re doing very well, thank you very much, courtesy of the McGuinty Liberals. An individual with an income of over \$100,000 got a 35% tax cut from the former Conservative government and another 18% tax cut from the federal Liberals. That’s a combined tax gift of \$9,600. An individual with an income of \$125,000 got a tax cut of 30% from the former Conservative government and a 16% tax cut from the federal Liberals. That’s a tax gift of

\$11,500. Meanwhile, a couple making \$49,000 each are going to pay \$1,200 in a new health tax, while someone with a \$125,000 income pays only \$900. That's how skewed this particular scheme is. That's how unfair and regressive this scheme is for modest- and middle-income families. It's bad enough that the Premier promised he would never bring in a premium; the worst part about it is how regressive it really is and how deep it digs into the pockets of people who can afford it the least.

There are two other things I want to point out. The Liberal Party, in order to try to sell this new health tax, had Mr McGuinty go on the air. I just want to quote to you a little bit of the radio ad: "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health premium will go to health care." Nine new MRI sites: They forget to mention that those were the nine announced by the Conservative government and, frankly, one of them has been up and operating in Oakville since June 2003. Meningitis vaccines for children: Oops, they forgot to mention that for the next three years the whole vaccine program in the province of Ontario is being paid through \$150 million of federal money. Every single penny of the new vaccine program for the next three years is being paid courtesy of the federal government, not the health premium.

Let's go back to the health premium: "Every penny ... will go to health care." Then you go to page 44 of the Liberal budget, it shows \$200 million outside of health care that the government is using your premium dollar and mine to pay for. That includes \$113 million in watershed and waste water projects under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. They're paying for sewer pipe.

It also includes \$3 million that is going to promote exercise under the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation. So almost \$200 million of the health care tax that was supposed to go into health care this year is paying for sewer pipes. I don't think most people out there on the street would say yes if you approached them and said, "Do you think sewer pipes is health care?" I don't think most people would think that at all, but that what's happening this year.

Next year it gets even better. Again, if you look at the budget, and this time if you go to page 70 and look at the revenue the government is going to take in from the federal government and the revenue that the government is going to take in through the new health tax, you'll see that next year the government has \$600 million that is not accounted for in the health care budget. I wonder what we're paying for next year? Sewer and water? Maybe a few roads? Maybe we'll get some affordable housing, Michael. What do you think? Maybe we're going to get the government living up to its promise on affordable housing. But next year, \$600 million of the health care tax is not going into Ministry of Health line items. No, it's going somewhere else. We wait with great anticipation to see what your premium dollar and mine, which was supposed to go to health care, is actually going to pay for next year.

Let me just conclude by saying the following—I said it at the start and I'll say it again: I'm not surprised that we're here dealing with the time allocation motion. There are very controversial features in both of these bills. I've just highlighted two. I've got to tell you, the OHIP, the new premium, really bothers me the most. Not only was it a clear broken promise, but it's so regressive and so unfair. I don't know how this government could possibly bring it in.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I'm delighted to be able to speak on this time allocation motion on two very important bills, Bills 106 and 149. I've been listening to the opposition side's comments and speeches. Let me tell you that this government hasn't done what the previous government did to the municipalities.

I remember way back in 1996 and 1998, when the previous government, the Tory government, decided to download the services to the municipalities. Municipalities in Ontario had a shortfall of \$450 million. If we hadn't gotten involved, we would have been more in debt than we are today—I'm talking about the municipalities—because I remember that the intent of the previous government was also to download the school buses, which in my area only would represent \$11 million more. We already had a \$23-million shortfall in my eight municipalities. Beside this, we had a meeting with the previous minister one time—Ernie Hardeman was the minister of that sector; I forget the name of his riding—and also the other minister who was responsible for nursing homes. Their intent was to download 50% of the cost of the operating budget for nursing homes. This would have represented another \$11 million just for my riding. The average was just a little over \$1.1 million per nursing home.

The government's intention was to download this, until we went and met with the minister responsible and the mayor of Oxford and the mayor of Russell. We said, "You just can't do that, because if you do download this, it's really not the people from that local municipality who are in those nursing homes. They come from all over. They are financed by the provincial government, and part of that money comes from the federal." But still they said, "Well, it's job creation within the community. It's like an industry." "No you cannot do that," we said. "Otherwise, we won't be able to keep those nursing homes open."

Just remember what they did: They downloaded the social housing. How much does that represent? It used to be fully paid by the provincial government. They downloaded 50% of the ambulances. Again, that cost millions of dollars to municipalities. They downloaded the property assessment responsibility. It represented at the time \$45 per unit in the community. They downloaded the rural Ontario Provincial Police, which was fully paid by the province.

Mr Yakabuski: Are you uploading it, Jean-Marc?

Mr Lalonde: We cannot at the present time, because you have set a system that we cannot get out of.

You also downloaded the health prevention project that every municipality has. How much does that represent? Finally, with discussion, they said, "OK, we'll keep on paying 50%." We, the Liberal government, have increased our share to 75%.

They downloaded septic tank inspection in the rural sector, again fully paid by the municipality.

The last thing is the agriculture sector. When I hear the people criticizing our government for what we are doing for agriculture, I remember I was here that day when this was announced. On my way down, I stopped in Kingston to make a few phone calls to—at that time, it was the property assessment office in Cornwall. They said, "Jean-Marc, they're not giving a penny to agriculture." In the past, agricultural people, the farming community, used to pay 100% of their municipal taxes to the municipality and then apply to the government to get a 75% rebate. Today they're only paying to the municipality 25% of their total assessment, so it is a loss of revenue to the community. My own municipalities, my eight municipalities at the time—now I've got 10 plus part of Ottawa—were \$23 million short.

1650

I hear the people on the other side, from Nickel Belt and also Beaches-East York, refer to this premium health tax; I'm saying health tax. I think, like the people are telling me, they have been misled by the opposition. I'm not saying they are misleading the people, but that I'm told by the people that they have been misled.

I was listening to the member for Beaches-East York. He was saying that a father of two children, with the wife and the father—I believe that is what he meant—both working—

Mr Prue: No, one working.

Mr Lalonde: One working. Well, exactly. He was saying they would be paying \$600. It's not true. You better start doing the calculation properly. Let me tell you also that the member for Nickel Belt said the person making \$200,000—the radio station in Ottawa keeps misleading the people also when they say the person making \$72,000 will pay \$750 a year, and the one making \$200,000 will be paying \$900 a year. That is completely false. When I say completely false, it's because I have the right figure. That was just confirmed. Anybody who makes over \$38,000 is paying a surtax of 20% on top of what he has to pay; that's \$600. The one making over \$70,000, on top of that \$750—well, it's \$72,000, it's \$750—is paying a surtax of 36%. You know what that means? A person who makes \$120,000, really, besides the \$750, will be paying an additional \$3,200 in taxes. Would you tell the people those are the right figures? Don't tell the people they are only paying \$900. That is not true. The people making \$200,000 a year are paying an additional \$10,000 of surtax; \$10,000 on top of the \$900. So please give the people the proper figures.

Interjection: They want to confuse people.

Mr Lalonde: I know they don't want to tell the truth, but this is really misleading the people of this province.

Let me tell you also that when we say that we're paying more than any other province, in the province of British Columbia, the individual pays an additional \$648 per family. Also, there's another province that is paying \$1,152 additional. So there are a lot of figures that have been thrown out around here, but I wish we would tell the real truth to the people of this province.

We refer to this special tax for the disabled when you buy a car. In the past, you used to get a tax credit for purchasing a car to accommodate a member of your family who is disabled. We did better than that. There used to be a program of \$8 million; today the program is \$10 million, \$2 million more, of which, in the past, people were gaining that tax credit, let's say \$2,400, \$2,800. What was the benefit to the handicapped people? Zero, because that handicapped person was not able to get in that car. Today we are giving up to \$15,000 of money to accommodate, to do some renovation or alteration to the vehicle and also to the home, from \$2,800 to \$15,000. Can we calculate this? I think so, if we take our pencil and figure it out properly.

In Bill 106, it's really clear. We said that we would help young families. We said that now the vaccinations will be a savings to young families of more than \$600. Just last week, my grandson, two months old, got two vaccinations, and I went to see my daughter-in-law. I said, "Manon, how much have you paid?" She said, "Now it is covered." She saved \$400 immediately. That's just to show you. We have to tell the people what the savings are going to be for young families. I wish that everyone in this room would tell the real story to the people.

We have said all along that we would look after the health of our people. The hospital budget in Ontario is \$11.3 billion. Our health budget is \$3.1 billion, 45% of our total budget. But you know something? Today, the people of Ontario have to pay for what the previous government hasn't done. It is like if you buy a 10-year-old car that never had any maintenance, all of a sudden you get this car, and you have to invest. This is what the McGuinty government is doing right now. We have to invest for the future, the future of our young families and our seniors.

We said that with that premium tax we would invest for the future and reduce the waiting time in hospitals. In Ottawa alone we have benefited from two new MRIs. This coming Friday, December 10, we will have the second opening in Ottawa at the Montfort, which is in my riding. I'm pleased to say that is the second of nine new MRIs. So do you mean to say that we are not investing in the future of our people?

I could speak for hours on this, because I'm telling you at the present time, again, that the McGuinty government is looking to the future. Today, with the \$5.6 billion that we were left with—the previous government kept saying, up to September, a month before the election, that they had balanced the budget. We got a beautiful gift at \$5.6 billion. So not to cut services; we are saying we will invest.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): It is really amusing to sit here and have a Liberal reach across the floor, point across the floor and tell the truth, when in fact we have had a government that has done nothing about holding to the truth with regard to their election platform and their election promises.

I must comment with regard to the last speaker as well, with regard to "the downloading." He didn't mention, of course, the tremendous amount of money which the government forgave the municipalities with regard to tax points because we picked up a huge part of the education tax, which benefited, in particular, Mr Lalonde's area and the rural areas which I represent to a huge degree. Our kids out in the rural area, under the Mike Harris government, got a huge boost to their resources. Ask the rural school boards. Ask the teachers in the rural area about the new special ed that moved into our areas.

Mr Lalonde is so wrong with regard to the benefits which the rural areas received under the Mike Harris government. They were tremendous. They were tremendous in terms of the tax forgiveness which we gave to the rural areas and the cheques which kept going to the school boards. The school boards in the rural areas like Mr Lalonde represents got far more money per student than they were receiving under previous governments.

Mr Lalonde says, "Tell the truth." Well, he only told half the story with regard to the municipal restructuring which took place in 1996 and 1997. He told all the bad parts but didn't tell the good and the balancing parts of that exercise.

1700

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): What are the good parts?

Mr Sterling: There were good parts for the rural areas. Talk to any rural politician, municipal politician. If you know the facts—

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: Unfortunately, Lou, you never did understand what happened.

But in this case, when I talk to my rural reeves from Lanark county, they understand that in a lot of cases they were better off, and they would have been much better off with a Progressive Conservative government, because we were going to take over the bridges, not only on roads that were switched from provincial highways but all municipal bridges. We were going to take on the task of renewing and rebuilding those right across Ontario. That was a promise we would have kept. As Mike Harris always did, we kept our promises.

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: Thirty hospitals. We built 21 new hospitals when we were there. People talk about closing hospitals. Yes, we closed some old hospitals, but we started and built 21 new hospitals across this province, another story the Liberals tend to forget to tell.

We're talking on a time allocation motion. We had in our Parliaments, from 1995 to 2003, a Liberal opposition party which played a very childish and silly game. They wasted unbelievable time in this Legislature by pushing

every piece of government legislation—there might have been a very few exceptions, but I would say 95% or 96% of the legislation—to three or four days of debate, even legislation where people ran out of things to say.

I served as government House leader. I was sitting on the side trying to negotiate with them to be reasonable. They weren't reasonable. They were ridiculous. They were silly. Therefore, the former Progressive Conservative governments under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves had to go to closure. We had to go to closure after three days of debate on a small bill—

Mr Patten: Tell them about the rule changes you made to render this place useless.

Mr Sterling: Listen, the rule changes for closure were made under the NDP government in 1992-93. Richard, I know more about rule changes than perhaps most, because I was involved in many of those at that time, and we brought forward some very progressive rule changes.

What happened in this place was that the Liberals, when they were sitting here, acted in a totally irresponsible manner with regard to their role in loyal opposition.

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: You did. There is no question that basically you forced Parliament to act as it did. My job as a House leader was very easy at that time, because the government House leader's greatest job and greatest challenge is when the opposition actually wants to make the place work. Under the leadership of John Tory, this place has started to work again. We don't need—

Interjections.

Mr Sterling: It's true. This place only works when members of this Legislature on all sides co-operate. The government will always co-operate, because they want legislation to pass. They will always co-operate. But what it takes is a leader of the opposition party to say, "We must make this place work. We must negotiate. We must pass legislation. It's the right of the government to pass legislation. We must collapse debate and agree to shorter terms of debate than are required to bring closure." That's what this government has seen with regard to Mr Tory and the Progressive Conservative opposition. We are trying to make this place work as a Parliament, as it has in the past.

I understand that members who haven't been here very long, and some of the members who were just recently elected in 2003, don't understand how obstinate the Liberal opposition was at that time. It was very difficult for Mr Tory to convince many members of this Legislature on the opposition side, in the Conservative caucus, to co-operate because, quite frankly, the Liberals, when they were over here, didn't act with reason. They were stubborn, they were stupid in terms of what they did as a group.

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: It was silly what you did. You wasted this Legislature's time, time after time, so that you could stand up and say, "The Tories have moved time allocation 67 times; they've moved it 68 times; They've moved it 70 times." Big deal. Nobody out there even knows what time allocation is all about.

What I'm saying to the Liberal backbenchers is, democratic renewal, the whole idea of changing how we are elected or changing what we do here, doesn't rest in a rule book. It doesn't rest in the standing orders. It doesn't rest in the statutes. It rests in the attitude of the MPPs who are in this place. You have to act in a responsible manner.

I find it ironic that we still talk about time allocation. It's actually quite natural that the government would move time allocation on a budget bill, because there are some very great objections to this bill. This is the bill that puts forward the whole health tax, the bill which gives us less for more. This is the bill which is going to define the next election. This is the bill that will be talked about in the 2007 election. You will see the ads of Dalton there, and they will talk about the health tax as the greatest broken promise, and we'll see what the people do about it.

This budget bill is perhaps one of the greatest disappointments with regard to people and creating cynicism about our system. I've heard Dalton McGuinty and the Attorney General talk about cynicism in our system. The cynicism in our system doesn't relate to how we're elected. The cynicism in our system doesn't relate to anything else than, when we as individual MPPs and politicians stand up, do we keep our word?

One of the greatest assets we had, going into the 1999 election, was that I would go to the door, and some people would say, "You know, Norm, I don't like some of the things you did, but I'll give you this: You did what you said you were going to do." Do you know what? That held us a long, long way. That held us a long, long way in the 1999 election. That's why we won the 1999 election. I suggest that perhaps it will have an alternate result in the upcoming election.

The other thing that I wanted to talk a little bit about is the budget. I want to refer to page 35 of the budget document. This is the budget bill. The 2004-05 fiscal plan shows a deficit for 2003-04 of \$6.2 billion and for 2004-05, the year we're in, a deficit of \$2.2 billion.

One of the interesting parts about this is the sleight of hand. The government complained about this phantom \$5.6-billion deficit which we would have had if we were in there, which, if anybody has dug into it, they know is nothing but a fantasy. Within this budget, it says that they're going to have a \$2.2-billion deficit. That's counting on the fact that they're going to get this one-time windfall of about \$3.9 billion by a sleight of hand with regard to the stranded debt in our electricity sector.

It's very, very interesting to read the auditor's report, which just came out recently. As the auditor said on page 458 of his report, "We will work with the OEFC"—the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp—"and the province to assess whether this proposed accounting treatment is appropriate." Well, you guys had better have the warning bells up, because to me that reads that the auditor doesn't think this sleight of hand is going to work. That means that if we read the budget of last year and increase the deficit—the deficit is going to stay the same in 2004-05

as it was in 2003-04—where's your management, boys? You complained about a deficit before. What are you going to do about fixing this?

1710

The odd part, when you read the fine print of the auditor, is that what he's basically saying, or what the government is saying, is that the \$4-billion stranded debt, which resulted from the Liberal policies of David Peterson when the NUG, or non-utility generator, contracts were written—basically what they did at that time, instead of going out and finding competitive generation, was sign a bunch of private contracts that guaranteed these private entrepreneurs eight, nine, 10 or 12 cents per kilowatt hour for 20 years at a time when power was being produced, in some cases, for under three cents per kilowatt hour. The \$4 billion relates to the fact that that was overpriced; they were paying too much for it.

The argument Mr Sorbara is making is that these very high prices are going to be reached very soon by the electricity market. Consumers in Ontario are going to have to pay eight, nine, 10 or 11 cents per kilowatt hour. What a way to win. The way to win, according to Dwight Duncan and the McGuinty government is, if you raise the price of your power so high that it meets these NUG contracts or these overinflated prices they agreed to way back in 1989 and 1990, then you can write off this \$4 billion. It's quite a sleight of hand to do that.

I look forward to voting on this motion. There's no question that this is probably the most regressive, and the largest, tax increase Ontarians have ever faced, and it's shameful in light of what was said by Mr McGuinty during the election.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to have an opportunity to make some comments on two pieces of legislation: Bills 106 and 149.

First of all, I think people would like to know that in the latest edition of Canadian Business magazine, Peterborough has been identified as the number one place in Ontario to do business, and across Canada we are ranked as number six in the nation as a place to do business. I would certainly like to congratulate Jay Amer, president of the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corp, which has spearheaded the efforts of late to bring new economic development to the city of Peterborough and the county of Peterborough.

While I'm congratulating people, Neal Cathcart, the reeve of Cavan-Millbrook-North Monaghan, just last Wednesday got elected as the new warden of Peterborough county. I know we want to wish Reeve Cathcart all the best as he assumes the new role of warden of Peterborough county.

Bill 149 and Bill 106 are very important pieces of legislation that we as a government, through time allocation, feel it's appropriate to move forward at this time. I heard some of the previous comments. I served 18 years in municipal politics in Peterborough, but one of the real reasons I was very interested in getting into the provincial political arena really goes back to 1995-96, when Al Leach, a former member of this Legislature, was

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. It was rather unfortunate that Minister Leach did not listen to his good friend David Crombie, who was head of the commission called Who Does What, which made recommendations to the government of the day about changing the relationship between the provincial government and municipalities in Ontario with regard to exchange of services.

David Crombie at that time, through careful analysis, did recommend a swap of services, but through David Crombie's recommendations it was to be revenue-neutral. But when Al Leach got his fingerprints on the Who Does What commission, he changed a lot of the components of who does what and, through Bill 85, saddled municipalities with a great deal of extra expense that municipalities are dealing with today. This government has moved rather decisively—the allocation of the gas tax, the changes in funding of public health in Ontario—to try to redress the fiscal imbalance that was created between the provincial government and municipalities in Ontario.

I want to have an opportunity to comment on a couple of the elements of Bill 149, the Budget Measures Act. One of the things I've heard about from many businesses in the great riding of Peterborough is the capital tax issue. Small business, medium-sized business and large business in the riding of Peterborough have indicated to me—we have some very large ones: Minute Maid, a subsidiary of the Coca-Cola company, and Quaker Oats, which is a subsidiary of Pepsi-GTQ Canada. Those kinds of companies that want to remain very competitive have talked about the capital tax in Ontario and are certainly very pleased that this government has taken steps to eliminate it by 2012. I know they're interested in that, because they want to make sure Ontario remains competitive from a tax perspective with many jurisdictions that they are competing with south of the border and internationally. This is a measure that has certainly received great positive support within the riding of Peterborough.

The other area I want to talk about that is key is the Ontario commercialization investment funds program. Many in this House are aware that the provincial government is funding the DNA cluster at Trent University, which is going to be a world-renowned centre with regard to forensics and the DNA issue. One of the things that is of concern, not only in Peterborough but in Ottawa, Toronto and other jurisdictions, is how do we commercialize the research that is generated through these technology clusters? Moving forward with the Ontario commercialization investment funds program allows world-renowned research that is now being performed in Ontario to get to the marketplace to generate those high-paying, highly productive jobs that we know sustain our economy long-term.

We know that the success in the technology triangle in the Kitchener-Waterloo-Guelph area has certainly been the birthplace of Research In Motion, the umbrella organization for the BlackBerry.

The BlackBerry initiative was actually spearhead by a person from Peterborough, Mr Balsillie. Mr Balsillie's mom and dad still reside in Peterborough. He has been a

very generous donor of several projects to support the Roy collection in Peterborough. He funded the cost to do that. Mr Balsillie's success in the Kitchener-Waterloo area has allowed him to make a number of philanthropic donations in the city of Peterborough.

The other thing I want to talk about that is again a great positive is the apprenticeship training tax credit. Now that I'm assisting the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers has asked me to look at the whole issue of apprenticeships in Ontario. I'm now in the process of putting together a task force of 11 or 12 people. I'm looking for recommendations of some names from the official opposition and the third party to put together this task force to really look at the whole issue of apprenticeship training in the province of Ontario and how we can improve it.

1720

We have an aging workforce in the province of Ontario, particularly in the skilled trades area, and it's certainly important for the government to have a framework to move forward so we can address those skilled trades in Ontario.

One of the great ways that we can do this is through a very innovative apprenticeship training program, and one of the ways that we'll be successful in this area is through our apprenticeship training tax credit, a very innovative way to encourage businesses—small, medium and large—to take advantage of this tax credit to employ apprentices, in order to make sure we have that workforce down the road.

The other thing that I'm particularly happy about in this budget measure is the Ontario property tax credit for seniors. In the riding of Peterborough, we have the second-oldest population in the province of Ontario, and for those medium- to low-income seniors who will see their property tax credit move from \$500 to \$625, it is indeed a great benefit and something that we want to see move forward very quickly.

I want to get on the record that I believe our tax credit is much fairer than what was proposed by the official opposition—then the government—during the campaign. They talked about eliminating the property tax paid by seniors. I had a lot of young people speak to me during the campaign. They said, "We're young and healthy. Can we withdraw our responsibility to fund health care because the seniors' population are withdrawing their support for education?"

It seems to me that each generation looks after each other in the province of Ontario. And why? The reason that we have such a great province is that all individuals in Ontario take on that responsibility of helping each other. We don't check out of supporting an activity in Ontario just because it's perhaps the in thing to do. We have that social responsibility, which has always been the hallmark of the people of Ontario. It's the hallmark of this government and we look forward, through time allocation, to moving those two bills forward.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm going to join the debate. It's not with a great deal of

pleasure, because I'm not too pleased about the time allocation motion.

Regrettably, this time allocation is going to suffocate and stifle debate on two very important bills, Bill 149 and Bill 106. They are extremely controversial bills. They have a tremendous negative impact on the people in the province of Ontario and they just continue the Liberal tax-and-spend tradition. In fact, if you take a look at Bill 149, it continues the Liberal tax grab by cancelling \$85 million in valuable tax credits from some of the most vulnerable people in our province.

For example, they cancelled the provincial sales tax rebate on vehicles purchased by those with disabilities. I received many, many letters from people in my community who were extremely concerned and indicated that this was going to have an impact on their ability to purchase or renew their present vehicle.

They cancelled the Ontario home ownership savings plan—another extremely good incentive—the workplace child care tax incentive, the workplace accessibility tax incentive, and the list goes on.

This is a bill which, as I say, was just building upon the largest tax grab ever in the history of this province, which we saw when the budget was introduced this year. Taxes in this province have skyrocketed by an unthinkable \$7 billion.

I also want to point out that although the Liberals, in opposition, spoke time and time again against time allocation, I just want to do a little bit of a comparison. During the first 14 months of the Mike Harris government, we only introduced time allocation once. That was Bill 7. However, during the first 14 months of the Dalton McGuinty government, this government, despite the rhetoric and the opposition to time allocation, has actually done it on 10 bills and motions: December 2, 2003, Bills 2, 4 and 5; June 10 of this year, Bill 83, An Act to implement Budget measures. So we are taking a look and we are recognizing that, despite the rhetoric, this government is supportive of time allocation. I think it's important to put that on the record, because this was a government that said they didn't want time allocation.

I'm not going to say anything else other than that I want to point out, as well, that there's a very negative impact in Bill 106 as far as the implications for northern Ontario are concerned, in that it takes Muskoka out of the north. I know my colleague has spoken very vigorously and aggressively against that proposal, but it seems it will all be to no avail. It's obvious that the people of Muskoka don't rate very highly with this government, because they will no longer qualify for the special programs.

I regret we're here today. I regret that people in the province aren't going to have a further opportunity to speak to these two bills that have a tremendous tax and financial impact.

I'm going to make sure our critic has the time he deserves.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to rise on this occasion. I hear the opposition talking about this whole notion of time allocation.

Certainly it isn't our favourite process to use. Unfortunately, there is a time when, if we're going to be able to achieve and attain what we need to attain when it comes to passing the bills, it's a needed process.

In the past, I remember when I was sitting in opposition, and I believe about 83% of all the bills that received royal assent were time-allocated. What I know is that more than the quantity of time we need to speak on topics, what we need, I believe, in this Legislature—I think everybody would agree with me—is some more substantive debate, rather than rhetoric that flows back and forth, some of it sometimes quite unacceptable, I think, to anyone who is listening.

It's important that we raise the bar in this place and that when we stand up to speak to bills, we actually speak with some substance. Again, I'll say it's not the quantity of time that one spends debating the bill, but what's important is the quality of time.

I want to state that in 1997, the Tories time-allocated—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Would the member take her seat for one second. Please come to order.

The member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Ms Di Cocco: Thank you. I'll just finish with this and say that in 1997, the Tories time-allocated five different bills in one motion, and in 1992, the NDP time-allocated four different bills that affected three different ministries. So that's the record. We hope that this bill will be passed and that we can move on.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak briefly on this time allocation bill, which many people would understand as closure, because it closes off debate. That's what the government is trying to do here this afternoon, and no doubt they'll be successful because there are more of them than there are of us. They'll have their way. They'll be able to limit debate on two budget bills in the Legislature.

This shows two things to me: One is the legislative incompetence on the other side of the House. They've been unable to manage their bills here, so they come to Christmastime and they have to time-allocate on budget bills. They clearly don't have a plan. They introduce bills about pit bull dogs at the same time as they introduce fundamental bills like budget bills, and then they don't know how to proceed, and end up coming back seeking closure.

1730

It also shows not only their incompetence but their untrustworthiness, as they are planning to do two budget bills, time-allocate them, invoke closure on them, contrary to their promises. The people of Ontario, I think, are accustomed to broken promises from this government, but here are two more. We know they number about 230. Here is number 152: "We will make our institutions more democratic by freeing your MPP to represent you, mandating public consultation on all major legislation,

requiring ministers to attend question period and giving you the choice to change the way we elect a government.” Here is the quote: “mandating public consultation on all major legislation.” Two major pieces of legislation before the House, and not only are the Liberals not going to have public consultations, breaking their leader’s promise—all of them ran on that platform, ran on that promise—not only are they going to break the promise, but they are going to time-allocate, have closure on the bills, so there won’t even be full debate on the bills, money bills, in this House.

What do these bills do? On the revenue side we see the largest single tax hike in the history of the province. As a result of that, we see lower provincial sales tax returns now. We see weak employment numbers in the Ontario economy. We also see the Canadian dollar rising rapidly.

The answer to that, which we get from the labour minister, who is here, is labour reform. Now, here is a way to kill jobs in Ontario: Take away the secret ballot in union certifications. The fundamental reform was made during the previous government, basic reform respecting democratic rights in the province of Ontario: the rights of working people, the rights of working families to have a secret ballot.

I’m sure the members here would be outraged if anyone suggested they could be elected or defeated on a show of hands without a secret ballot, but they will do that and they are doing that now—they’ve got a bill before this House—to take away the right of workers to a secret ballot. It’s not good for them—no, not for them—but it’s good enough for workers. So they are going to dictate to workers, “You don’t have the rights that I do,” that they have as elected members of this place, to have a secret ballot when they seek election. It is shockingly retrograde. It is going exactly the wrong way. If you want to increase revenues, increase jobs, increase investment, increase reinvestment in Ontario, that one piece of legislation sends the message to employers, to those who want to do business in Ontario but who have choices—and most of them do have choices—about where this government is at in terms of its view of business and how welcoming it is to investment.

The largest single tax hike sends another message, of course. We know that tax policy is the number one influencer when it comes to investment in the province. Tax policy changes behaviour in the marketplace. I don’t know when the Minister of Finance and the Premier and the Chair of Management Board, the money ministers in this government, are going to realize that when you adversely change tax policy, you kill jobs, you reduce the incentive to invest in this province, and for those who have already invested, to reinvest in this province. In the long term, it is disastrous fiscal policy in the province, and you’ll see as you go along year after year the damage you are doing to the economy, until we will have to fix it when we are re-elected under our leader, John Tory, in 2007.

Collective bargaining—here is how they are handling collective bargaining: “We’ll negotiate with the doctors,

we’ll arrive at an agreement with a group of them, we’ll put it to a vote, we’ll be defeated, and then we’ll impose it.” That’s the collective bargaining pattern we are seeing from the Liberal government in Ontario, and this will get worse. The nurses go to arbitration, I believe, in February. Other health care workers are bargaining. If you look at the university publications from the faculty associations, here’s what they’ve got. They’ve got Jim Stanford, the economist with the Canadian Auto Workers, giving them advice—oh, my goodness—in the public sector. What’s the advice? We should be negotiating increases above the cost of living. There we go: above inflation, above the cost of living. These are the pressures that are coming to bear on the government. And 2005, I tell you, is going to be a very difficult year for those on the other side of the House because you’re out of control on your spending. Your revenues are being challenged because you’re killing the golden goose by raising taxes. Dramatic tax hikes in the province of Ontario and changing labour laws—you’re going exactly in the wrong direction if you want to stimulate revenues in Ontario.

Where is the capital spending? You know, you’ve gone on a \$4-billion spending spree. Where is the capital spending? Where is the spending for the NICU, the neonatal intensive care unit, at Women’s College Hospital? It’s one of the finest in the world. Our triplet boys were there 13 years ago. Where is the spending on intelligent things in the province of Ontario? Instead of pit bull laws and sushi bills and nonsense like that, where’s the 407 east? Where is the spending, the capital spending, on health care? Where is the new courthouse in Durham? What’s wrong with the Liberal government? Why are you obsessed with picking silly things, and then when it comes to important things you say, “We’ll cut off debate”? Bring-your-own-wine. They must be serving wine over there.

When are you going to deal with the important things, the things that matter to the people of Ontario? You know, on the GO train they don’t talk about sushi; on the GO train they talk about the 407 east: “When are we going to get the 407 east?” In Durham region they talk about, “Why are you greenbelting virtually the entire township of Brock?” Why are you doing that to Durham region? It’s Durham region’s opportunity to grow, to have some jobs. The Oak Ridges moraine: Of course we want to protect it. The Lynde Marsh: I did that already. This House did that.

Why aren’t you respecting middle-class working people in Ontario and what is important for them, instead of this nonsense about sushi and pit bulls? Why don’t you look at the important issues that matter to people? I beg you to do that.

The year 2005 is basically this government’s last chance to redeem itself. You’re on the wrong track. Do one thing in 2005—I think the Minister of Energy is starting to figure it out. Do at least this right: Break your promise on the coal-fired plants so at least the lights will be on in Ontario.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I appreciate the comments of the member opposite in relation to Durham, but I have to say, having been one of the champions of UOIT, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, having worked hard on that, I thought he would have been standing on his feet, applauding our government. I thought he would have been applauding our government—the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Minister of Finance—for their good work with the ministry staff, for their good work with the university to ensure that not only did we follow up on the discussions that were going on with a commitment to allow the university to move forward with \$190 million worth of activity, but actually by bringing the third party in to ensure they had a solid business case, enhanced that by \$30 million—\$220 million worth of growth in Durham. I thought he would have stood on his feet and championed that cause, not complain, not complain; about what his government didn't do all that time, but thank us for what we're doing. I can suggest to the member opposite that what he might want to do is sit tight and watch what good things do—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry to interrupt, but I can't hear the speaker. I can't hear the member for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge. I would ask the House to come to order.

Are you finished? OK. Further debate?

1740

Mr Yakabuski: I too am pleased to speak to this motion. We shouldn't be here, but here we are.

What I just can't get over is the hypocrisy of this government. I look at quote after quote—

The Acting Speaker: I ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr Yakabuski: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker.

What I can't get over is the double standard this government has when it comes to debate in this fine chamber. They went on ad infinitum in the past about how the previous government invoked closure. Well, in the first 14 months of the Harris government, they used time allocation exactly one time. This government, counting today, will have invoked time allocation 10 times. That is what is so wrong here, that is why there is no credibility on that side of the House, and that is why we have a problem getting people interested in the democratic process in this country and in this province.

They have a government where the Premier went on and on, making promise after promise to the people of Ontario through the election period in 2003, and now they see him in a systematic fashion break each one of those promises, one by one—more to come. I suspect that we will see time allocation on almost every bill that comes before this House if we don't deal with it somehow, because this government doesn't want debate.

Let me quote one of their members: "I'm talking about your reckless haste to invoke closure and stop debate, and I have the right to debate that. Are you denying me the right to debate that? Would you stand up and deny me

the right to debate? Is that what you're trying to do? Do you want to stand up and I'll let you speak to deny my right to debate?" That was the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, November 22, 2000, a little over four years ago. They don't want to debate. They just want to ram it down our throats.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I want to thank my good friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for the introduction. Thank you, John. It's a great part of this province and I think more people should visit our beautiful Killaloe area.

I wanted to say that, oddly enough, the members opposite I think do protest too much, because they agreed to this programming motion so that these very important bills could be passed to enact some very positive actions for the people of Ontario. It's ironic that they're protesting this when what we're trying to do with these bills is to help northern Ontario, which was long neglected, with the grow bonds program.

We're eliminating the capital tax, which the previous government said should be eliminated. We're helping to create jobs. I think that's what the people in Ontario are interested in. They're interested in, "What is the government doing to ensure my son, my daughter, my unemployed neighbour has a job?" The apprenticeship training program we're putting in with the tax credit is going to help create jobs. That's good for the people of Ontario, and that's the kind of work we're trying to put ahead.

I'd like to see how the members opposite can say that for the 650,000 families that are senior households, whether tenants or homeowners, who are going to get a break on their property taxes of up to \$625, that isn't a good thing. I want to see how they're going to explain to people that they voted against that \$625 going to the neediest seniors who pay property tax through their rent. How can they say that isn't a good thing? That's in these two budget bills.

We're also ensuring that GO Transit works for another year. I was laughing, almost out loud, when I heard the member from Whitby-Ajax talking about people and the GO train. His government took away funding from public transit, took away funding from the GO Transit system. Then, here is a member of a government, the most laughable thing of all, I say to the member from Northumberland—the Minister of Finance gave away one of the most important assets we had in this province, gave it away for nothing, and that is the 407. They gave it away to a Spanish consortium for 99 years. Was that contract ever before this House? It never was. It took four years to make that contract public.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I can't hear the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, and I would ask the House to come to order, please, so he can conclude his remarks.

Mr Colle: I think I've struck a nerve with the 407. Maybe the former Minister of Finance could explain to the people of Ontario how you could justify—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Perhaps the opposition members didn't hear me the last time when I asked them to come to order. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Colle: I would really like to get the answer: What was the government of the day thinking when they signed that 407 contract? What in the world were they thinking when they gave away that asset for 99 years, with all the revenues from the tolls going to a Spanish consortium? The users—the hard-working, tax-paying people of Ontario—who built the highway now have virtually no rights because the contract that the member for Whitby-Ajax signed essentially took away all the rights of the motorists who use that highway and sold them off to a Spanish consortium for virtually nothing.

They are the last ones to lecture us about fiscal responsibility and financial mismanagement. They are the ones who not only gave away the 407; they spent hundreds of millions of dollars on American consultants to supposedly fix OPG. Where were they when they were watching the public purse then?

What we're doing with these bills is trying to make some of the things right. We're trying to fix some of the things that need fixing in this province. We're trying to make health care workers—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Please take your seat. Member for Whitby-Ajax, member for Simcoe North and member for Erie-Lincoln, please come to order.

Mr Colle: With these bills, we're trying to make our health care system work better for everybody. We're trying to make our cities work. We're trying to ensure that there are more jobs through apprenticeship training.

I know the members opposite are afraid to talk about their years of mismanagement. With these bills, we're trying to make some things right for the people of Ontario, because we feel the people of Ontario deserve better. They don't deserve more 407 giveaways and OPG black holes; the people of Ontario deserve better.

The Acting Speaker: The time allocated for this motion has expired.

Mr Caplan has moved government notice of motion number 293. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker: Would all those in favour of the motion please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brotten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Racco, Mario G.
Brown, Michael A.	Leal, Jeff	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Rinaldi, Lou
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Oraziotti, David	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard	

The Acting Speaker: Will all those members opposed to the motion please rise one at a time and be counted by the table.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martel, Shelley	Witmer, Elizabeth
Eves, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Flaherty, Jim	O'Toole, John	
Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 16.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being just past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 in the afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East /	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
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Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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	Prue, Michael (ND)		
Beaches-East York /		Hamilton West /	
Beaches-York-Est		Hamilton-Ouest	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Springdale		Addington	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton Centre /	Jeffrey, Linda (L)		Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton-Centre		Huron-Bruce	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Milloy, John (L)
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga			
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands /	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston et les îles	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint		Matthews, Deborah (L)
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		Kitchener-Centre	
Don Valley West /		Kitchener-Waterloo	
Don Valley-Ouest		Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	Lanark-Carleton	
	O'Toole, John (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	
Durham	Colle, Mike (L)	London North Centre /	
Eglinton-Lawrence	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	London-Centre-Nord	
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Hudak, Tim (PC)	London West /	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	London-Ouest	Ramal, Khalil (L)
	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	London-Fanshawe	Wong, Tony C. (L)
		Markham	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Erie-Lincoln		Mississauga Centre /	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Essex		Mississauga-Centre	
		Mississauga East /	
		Mississauga-Est	
		Mississauga South /	Peterson, Tim (L)
		Mississauga-Sud	
		Mississauga West /	Delaney, Bob (L)
		Mississauga-Ouest	
		Nepean-Carleton	
		Niagara Centre /	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
		Niagara Falls	
		Nickel Belt	Craitor, Kim (L)
		Nipissing	Martel, Shelley (ND)
		Northumberland	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Oak Ridges	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
			Klees, Frank (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
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Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
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Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
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St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Gilles Bisson, Marilyn Churley, Jeff Leal,
Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch, Tim Peterson,
Khalil Ramal, Maria Van Bommel, Tony C. Wong
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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Khalil Ramal
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Peter Fonseca, Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese,
Ted McMeekin, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O. Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 8 December 2004

Mercredi 8 décembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 8 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 décembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STEVEN TRUSCOTT

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Today we will have joining us in the gallery the grade 12 class from Humber-view secondary school in Bolton, from the riding of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, represented in this House by my colleague, the former Premier of Ontario, Ernie Eves. Their teacher, George Allain, brought them here today to present to the Attorney General an Internet petition his class created and worked on. Believing that justice delayed is justice denied, their petition calls on the Attorney General to expedite the Steven Truscott matter in the Ontario Court of Appeal.

Their Web site, which hosts the petition, <http://truscott.peelschools.org>, has drawn visitors from around the world. Unfortunately, the Attorney General did not have the time to meet with them. Therefore, I am pleased, on behalf of the Ontario Legislature and my colleagues in the PC caucus, to commend the efforts and initiatives of these students and to assure them that we will deliver their petition to the Attorney General. I commend their teacher, George Allain, for supporting their interest and enthusiasm in the cause of justice.

HYDRO ONE POWER LINES

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): Over the past year, there has been a growing concern among residents in my riding of Markham and throughout York region about Hydro One's proposal to run high-voltage transmission power lines through high-density residential areas and schoolyards.

Hydro One recently issued an environmental study report that is currently out for public review and comment until December 20. Municipal and regional councils, school boards and residents have expressed concern that a proper examination of more feasible, long-term alternatives is required. In addition to considering economic implications, we need to consider all and any environmental and health implications.

My constituents are requesting that Hydro One study carefully all options that have been placed before them, including those proposed by the Markham Hydro One Task Force, with respect to supplying York region with its demand for energy.

GREENBELT LEGISLATION

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to draw the attention of this House to a concern I have with the government's current greenbelt legislation.

The concern that I'm raising has to do with the lands located outside of the greenbelt, rather than those located within its boundaries. Many people are concerned that restrictions placed on lands within the greenbelt will place additional pressures on those lands adjacent to it. The boundaries of the greenbelt are in many cases more political than scientific. Part of my riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock is in the greenbelt and part is outside of it. The greenbelt boundary is along the township line.

There is a very real possibility that development may leapfrog over the greenbelt on to lands that have not yet been a focal point for development. I wonder about how this will impact local features and what protections will be in place for environmentally sensitive areas like wetlands, endangered species habitats and old-growth forests.

Although in many cases some of the development will be welcomed by local communities, the arbitrary nature of the boundaries has ended up including lands in the greenbelt that should, based on science, be excluded, while excluding lands that many environmentalists believe should be included.

I don't think anybody wants to protect land on one side of the street while opening up land that is just as in need of protection to unfettered development. But that is exactly what is being done, because you have not addressed the possibility of new development on environmentally sensitive lands located outside the greenbelt boundaries.

CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): This Saturday, December 11, the residents of Niagara Falls will celebrate its 100th anniversary as an incorporated city. It promises to be a magnificent event. It is the citizens' hard work and effort which has made the city of Niagara Falls the most recognized address in the world.

Over the years, the city has become one of the most romantic places to visit on this continent and has earned the title of the honeymoon capital of North America. Kings, queens, presidents and heads of state worldwide have visited, and today it remains the number one tourist destination of international travellers. Movie stars and

celebrities have helped foster this global image. People will remember Marilyn Monroe and Christopher Reeve, as well as our own Barbara Frum and James Cameron.

The province has over the years been a major partner to our success, making significant investments in the development of power from the mighty Niagara and establishing the Niagara Parks Commission to preserve and protect the beauty of this wonder of the world. This province has also invested heavily in the tourist industry in our own town to ensure our economic prosperity, and it's choosing once again to invest in the power of this dynamic community we call home through the building of the Niagara tunnel.

This city is much more than fame; it's the home of nearly 80,000 great people who contribute daily to the positive growth in the economy of this province.

Mr Speaker, I would ask you, the members of the House and the people of Ontario to join with my people from Niagara Falls, my city, to wish them a very happy 100th anniversary.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It saddens me to see hundreds of trucks ship garbage to Michigan every day, while our landfill sites are full of waste that should have been recycled.

I believe this government must introduce a long-term plan for waste management within our own borders. Most municipalities in my own riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka have developed responsible waste management programs; however, this is not true across the province. It's shocking that we are the only province that does not require producers to take full responsibility for beverage container waste. Eight out of 10 provinces have laws that require a deposit return system for most or all beverage containers.

The benefits are clear: With a deposit return system, litter can be reduced by as much as 47%. The Beer Store is a great example of how deposit return can work. Through its voluntary program, the Brewers of Ontario have a return rate of almost 98%.

This government must develop a province-wide plan for waste management that is creative, responsible and requires producers to take greater responsibility for the waste they generate. As a matter of fact, today I will be delivering a petition that calls for a province-wide deposit return system. I've also introduced a private member's bill that would require the LCBO to implement a deposit return system, and I intend to introduce a more comprehensive bill in the spring which I hope this government will support.

1340

ANDREW STEWART

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This past Friday, my community was shattered by the news that a teenaged student at East York Collegiate was stabbed to

death—murdered, it seems, for defending the honour of his friend. Countless East York young people have expressed to the media that Andrew Stewart was a soft-hearted and wonderful young man who often stood up for those who could not stand up for themselves. He was popular, he was active, and he was a true friend to those who knew him.

His funeral took place this morning, attended by large numbers of friends, family and community members. If you read the *Globe and Mail* today, you would have been moved, as I was, by the words of Leda Westbrook, a long-time East York Collegiate Institute teacher. She expressed her sorrow for what she views as a lost generation, a generation of youth that has been impacted by an agenda that has not put the needs of kids and youth first. She and many others in the close-knit community need to know why this child died. She feels that in recent years our youth have been neglected and that our communities must re-examine their priorities before another child is killed.

We all agree with Ms Westbrook. It is our job as legislators to give communities, schools and families the resources they need to ensure that this does not happen to another child of ours. I understand that a trust fund has been established in his name and that donations may be made at any TD Bank.

I know that all members of the community and all members of the assembly will join me in offering heartfelt condolences to all those who have been touched by Andrew's life, especially to his parents, to his school-mates, to his friends and to the community of East York. May the circumstances that led to his death never happen again.

DAIRY FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I rise today in the House to welcome representatives of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, many of whom join us in the gallery today. Welcome.

The Dairy Farmers of Ontario is a farmer-run organization—not-for-profit, actually—operated and completely financed by the more than 5,800 dairy farmers and their families in the province. Collectively, they produce almost 11 million litres of milk annually, with a farm gate value of over 20% of total agricultural output in the province, making Ontario the largest producer, processor and consumer of milk in Canada.

In fact, the community of Winchester in my beautiful riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh is renowned for its dairy production. Winchester is known as the dairy capital of Canada. This friendly town holds its annual Dairyfest each August in celebration of this achievement.

Ontario's dairy industry is a vibrant and vital part of the provincial economy, and thousands of jobs can be attributed directly to this industry, as well as the thousands of spinoff jobs in both rural and urban communities. I know that the minister had an opportunity to come down to my riding and to see those spinoff jobs, to see agriculture in action this summer.

We want to acknowledge the contribution that Ontario dairy farmers make to the province, and we look forward to working with them to ensure that the industry continues to meet the challenges ahead. I welcome all members to a reception this afternoon at 6 pm, where we will have an opportunity to dialogue with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

COUNTIES OF PERTH AND MIDDLESEX

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise to update all members concerning good news in my riding, not the least of which would be Sharon Weitzel being here today to visit.

Last week, Ed Hollinger, former warden and current mayor of North Perth, was acclaimed to succeed Ian Forrest as the new warden of Perth county. With North Perth hosting the 2005 International Plowing Match, I can think of no better leader for Perth county this year.

Also last week, the mayor of Lucan Biddulph, Tom McLaughlin, was elected by council to succeed Ian Brebner as the warden of Middlesex county. I want to thank both Ian Forrest and Ian Brebner for their effective leadership of their respective counties in 2004. I look forward to working closely with wardens Hollinger and McLaughlin in 2005 and benefiting from their experience.

Recently, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced the town of St Marys would receive funding for well water upgrades, thanks to the Canada-Ontario infrastructure program. This money will improve the quality of drinking water for 2,378 households in St Marys, and will bring the municipal water system into compliance with the Ontario drinking water systems regulation. By strengthening the communities we live in, like St Marys, our government is delivering real, positive changes in the priority areas our government supports.

Finally, I want to send a public note of congratulations to a former constituent, Richard Nesbitt, on his newly defined role as both the president and CEO of the TSX.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish not only my colleagues in the Legislature and the dairy farmers, but all of my constituents in Perth-Middlesex, a safe and merry Christmas and a happy new year.

HEALTH CARE

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): For those of you who haven't read the newspapers today, I'd like to summarize an article I read in the National Post this morning. It went something like this: John Tory wants more private health care. His euphemism is "private sector involvement," but translated, he says he wants more private health care. Since becoming Conservative leader, John Tory hasn't taken a substantive stand on many political issues. In this article today, however, he took a definite stand on health care: He wants more privatization.

I can't say it's a shock. There have been recent examples of the Conservative leader trying to scare Ontarians into believing in private health care. He went so far as to misrepresent hospital budget numbers in Ottawa, something the Ottawa Citizen called a "major gaffe."

I'd like to remind him and those who call for greater privatization that Ontario is best served by universal health care. It's a system that benefits us all, not just those who can afford to pay their way to the front of the line. Public health care shouldn't be about ideology; it should be about good public policy.

In the short time we've been in government, we've already begun reversing the negative record of the previous Conservative government, a record which involved more privatization, fewer hospitals, firing nurses and allowing care to deteriorate.

Yes, we are bringing MRIs back into public hands because it is the right thing to do, and we are expanding their hours of operation to serve even more Ontarians. Everyone deserves equal access to MRI machines and other health care services. There should be no delineation between those who can afford to pay for services and those who can't.

Shame on the Conservative leader for abandoning public health care.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report of intended appointments dated December 8, 2004, from the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GREENBELT PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 157, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la protection de la ceinture de verdure.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): The

purpose of the bill is to change the date of repeal of the act from December 16, 2004, to March 9, 2005.

Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to proceed with the orders for second and third reading of Bill 157, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, and with the questions being put immediately, without debate or amendment.

The Speaker: Is there consent? Agreed.

GREENBELT PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE
DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la protection de la ceinture de verdure.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

GREENBELT PROTECTION
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE
DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la protection de la ceinture de verdure.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the House calendar.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that when the House adjourns on December 16, 2004, it shall, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), stand adjourned until Tuesday, February 15, 2005; and

That the House shall meet from Tuesday, February 15, 2005 to Wednesday, March 9, 2005; and

That when the House adjourns on Wednesday, March 9, 2005, it shall stand adjourned until Tuesday, March 29, 2005, which date commences the spring sitting period.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting the order for time allocation on Bill 135.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that the December 6, 2004 order of the House allocating time to proceedings on Bill 135, An Act to establish a greenbelt area and to make consequential amendments to the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 and the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994, be rescinded.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to thank the government House leader for working with what has been, really, the most constructive official opposition that we've seen in 50 years. And I would like to thank the government for consideration of public hearings on this issue.

The Speaker: That's a rather peculiar point of order.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to acknowledge that and express my hope that they stay the official opposition for another 50 years.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NURSES

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm proud to speak in the House today about an initiative that is crucial to the future of health care in Ontario, an initiative to give our nursing graduates a better start with their careers in Ontario.

I met many of these nursing graduates today at our announcement at St Joseph's Health Centre here in Toronto. St Joseph's was an ideal setting to talk about this important initiative. It is leading the way in excellent patient care in this province. It's an organization that understands that strong hospitals are lifted up by the hands of a strong nursing workforce.

One of their recent achievements, but certainly not their only achievement, is creating 13 new full-time nursing positions with the targeted funding received from our government. They have a number of programs to improve the job satisfaction of both experienced and new nurses, including supporting experienced nurses to coach

and support new nurses. They are doing this while maintaining a balanced budget. That's something to aspire to.

Our government believes that nurses are the very heart and soul of health care. They are central to our plan to improve patients' access to high-quality health care in people's communities. We are doing this by investing in 150 comprehensive primary care teams, a model we call family health teams. We are doing this by driving care down to the community level by making unprecedented investments in home care, long-term care and community mental health. We are doing this by reducing wait times, starting with cancer care, cardiac care, hip and knee replacements, cataracts, and MRI and CT scan access. We are doing this by bringing prevention and health promotion to the centre of health care.

All of these things have two things in common: They are vital to the future of medicare, and they all depend on the talent, hard work and dedication of our nursing professionals. Our government is rebuilding the foundations of nursing, and that must begin by providing new grads with the opportunities to blossom and to grow. We desperately need new graduates to step into the shoes of nurses who are fast approaching retirement. New graduates need sufficient time to acquire the knowledge, skill and experience they need to practise independently.

For our health care system to grow and thrive, we need the energy and enthusiasm of new nursing graduates. Today we are giving more of these talented new nurses the opportunity to build a rewarding career here in the province of Ontario.

We are investing an additional \$29.1 million to support new nursing graduates in Ontario. This is the first year of a long-term initiative to support new nurses in this province. Our new nursing program will assist nursing grads to make the critical transition between nursing school and the workplace.

It does this in three important ways:

First, it provides them with greater exposure to the real-world clinical environment while they are still in school so that they can prepare for the challenges of delivering front-line care once they graduate. We are investing \$10 million in our nursing schools for clinical simulators. These are anatomically correct mannequins that display all the signs and symptoms of injury and response to treatments as a human does. I understand from those who know that this miraculous technology is as close as you can get to the human experience.

Second, once they graduate, our investments will provide them with the benefits and security of a full-time position in either a hospital or long-term-care homes. We are investing \$17.7 million so that hospitals and long-term-care homes can create 1,000 full-time positions for a period of three months this year so they can gain valuable work experience and build on their skills. This will allow employers to recruit new graduates immediately into full-time positions while these graduates are waiting for permanent opportunities. It's crucial that we get these nurses working as soon as they graduate so

we don't lose them to another province or to another profession.

Finally, our new-graduate strategy allows experienced nurses to pass along their knowledge and skills to new nurses. We are investing \$1.4 million to support experienced nurses to mentor newly hired nurses, as well as student nurses who are completing a clinical placement.

Starting this week, the ministry is reviewing all applications from hospitals, long-term-care homes and nursing schools for these programs, and I can tell you that, based on the number of proposals we've received, there's a great deal of interest. We will inform applicants for all of these programs of their funding allocation before the holidays.

Our new nursing graduate program builds on our comprehensive strategy begun already to create 8,000 new positions and healthy work environments for all our nurses. We have made great progress toward this goal already.

In February, we invested \$25 million in 33 large hospitals to create full-time positions for nurses, followed in April by a further \$25 million in small- and medium-sized hospitals for full-time nursing positions. We also invested \$39 million for hospitals to purchase safer and better equipment, mechanical bed lifts to reduce on-the-job injury for our nurses while they care for patients.

In October, we invested \$191 million in long-term-care homes to hire 2,000 additional staff, including 600 nurses, and achieve new care standards, including having a registered nurse on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and to give residents at least two baths a week. Our investments in hospitals and long-term-care homes alone support 2,400 more full-time nursing positions in Ontario. That does not take into account the nurses hired through the additional \$103 million we have invested in home care this year.

All investments in nursing from here on in will be tied to results. Hospitals and long-term-care homes will be required to account for how they spend the targeted money they receive for nursing positions to ensure funding goes to the front lines, not to their bottom line. Hospitals and long-term-care homes are required to submit nursing plans approved by the chief nursing officer, confirming that they have used targeted money for nurses to hire those nurses full-time.

But we need to ensure that front-line nurses are involved in decisions affecting bedside care. From now on, the local union representatives will be required to confirm in writing that monies were used exclusively for the purposes for which they were sent, and that is to create full-time nursing positions.

1400

The ministry has different mechanisms to confirm the number of full-time positions created by these organizations. For example, hospitals provide us with the actual financial and HR data through the management information system that tracks nursing positions at the end of the fiscal year. We are asking long-term-care homes and CCACs to provide us with similar data

through surveys this year. We can confirm that our \$25-million investment in large hospitals created 638 new full-time nursing positions, according to nursing plans submitted. As more hospitals and long-term-care facilities report back through their agreement with the ministry in the coming weeks, we will be able to report on how many more of the 2,400 funded positions have been filled.

Every moment of every day, nurses make a difference in the lives of individual patients, families and communities. Nursing is a career of passion and compassion, of knowledge and precision. It's obvious it can also be very tough work. We want our nursing graduates to make nursing a lifelong vocation and journey. They are a precious resource that our government will not squander, as evidenced by this element of our strategy announced today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I listened with great interest to the comments presented by the Minister of Health. I enjoyed his speech. I applaud many of the initiatives he talked about. I applauded them four or five years ago, when many of the initiatives were talked about by the previous government, the previous Minister of Health.

But I want to talk to the minister directly. The minister was at St Joe's here in the city of Toronto. Maybe the minister should have gone to St Joe's in the city of London. Let's look at what's going on in St Joe's in the city of London. In St Joe's in London, we have recently been told that a 24-bed mental health ward at London's St Joseph's regional health centre will be closed at the end of this week, as the local hospital workers there have learned. They will see as many as 25 hospital workers thrown on the street on Christmas Eve, thrown to the wolves on behalf of this government.

There's a pattern here. There are 65 hospitals around the province that have submitted plans to this minister on cost-cutting strategies because this minister has underfunded them. They're hospitals like the Ottawa Hospital, where they're going to have to lay off literally hundreds of people because they only got a 1.8% increase. They're going to have to lay off nurses, I say to the Minister of Health.

We gave this Minister of Health a clear opportunity for him and his government to tell us where they stood with respect to Ontario's nurses. Our leader, John Tory, and our caucus put forward a resolution for debate in this place asking for a moratorium on the layoff of nurses, and what happened when that happened? Every single Liberal member stood up and voted against it, to give the green light to this minister, his ministry, his bureaucrats and the hospitals around the province of Ontario that it was somehow acceptable to lay off nurses.

So it's with some fanfare that the minister makes a small announcement today. It's with a great deal of fanfare that hospital administrators and volunteer boards right across this province are going to have to do his dirty work and lay off nurses and lay off those dedicated

health care professionals and workers who assist them in delivering their job to the province of Ontario.

I say to the member opposite, we can talk about the Ottawa Hospital and the tiny increase that he gave them this year. They can look back at the record of the former government when we gave them a \$50-million base budget increase, the biggest base budget increase in the history of the province, and indeed the entire country. Look at hospitals right around the province. Look at London, where they got a less than 1% increase. They're desperately looking for hope before the holiday season.

But this minister is not going to get back to hospitals in the province of Ontario about their forced cuts of nurses while the House is sitting. No, that'll come under the cover of darkness, when the assembly has adjourned for the month of January. I wish he would respond to what those hospitals are saying.

I look at his announcement that he talked about today. The previous government established the nursing task force and accepted each and every one of the recommendations: Created an additional 12,000 nursing positions and invested some \$400 million to respond to the results of the nursing task force. It was the Harris government that actually passed the legislation with respect to nurse practitioners. We were the first province to do that. We created the chief nursing officer—the first government to do that.

The minister talked about long-term care. It was the previous conservative government that invested \$1.2 billion into our long-term-care sector, creating 20,000 new long-term-care beds in the province—some 1,300 in the city of Ottawa alone—which have been a godsend to families in our province. Every one of those 1,300 new long-term-care beds was open, with a resident sleeping in it, on election night, I say to the member from Niagara. We also redeveloped 16,000 long-term-care beds to bring them up to code. This minister is simply building on the very solid foundation that was given.

I want to ask the minister to give consideration—would he not now admit the error of his ways and join John Tory and the official opposition in our call for a moratorium on nursing layoffs? When the vote came to this House on whether this minister would vote for a moratorium on nursing layoffs, he was absent at the switch.

The Speaker: Before we get to the next response, I'm just going to ask members to keep their conversations a bit lower. A lot of movement is happening and I am having difficulty listening to the responses.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I was just actually handed a press release that says St Joseph's, the hospital the minister just referred to—

Mr Baird: No, in London.

Ms Churley: Oh, this is the St Joseph's in London—is to close the mental health ward to balance its books. That's the backdrop which we're talking about today.

I am happy to respond today for the New Democratic Party. It appears that today's announcement is a re-announcement of an announcement made at the Toronto

East General Hospital in my riding over six months ago, in June 2004. During estimates committee in October 2004, the NDP health critic, Shelley Martel, asked the minister if this money had been allocated to hospitals and long-term-care facilities. The minister said it had not and that it would happen in the fall. Therefore, today's announcement is essentially the announcement of the implementation of the June 3 commitment. It's taken that long to get here. Why has it taken six months to finally get the money out the door?

The broader issue that your ministry urgently needs to address is to recruit and retain more nurses in the system.

During the election campaign, you pledged to hire 8,000 nurses during your four-year mandate. This year, only 638 new registered nursing jobs have been created. Clearly, this doesn't come anywhere close to the promised 8,000 new nurses.

In January, my colleague Shelley Martel urged you to give nurses 2,000 reasons to stay in Ontario by funding 2,000 full-time nursing positions as a first step toward adding 8,000 to Ontario's health care system over the next four years. The NDP is calling on the McGuinty government to hire 2,000 full-time nurses this year and 2,000 in each of the next three years. Keep your promise.

More than 5,400 Ontario RNs have left, most of them to work in the US. Meanwhile, Ontario has the second-worst RN per capita ratio in Canada: 67.6 RNs per 100,000 people, compared to a national average of 74.3. We should be doing better.

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On Thursday, November 25, 2004, the Ontario Nurses' Association launched its "Still Not Enough Nurses: Act Now! Patients Can't Wait" public awareness campaign at its 2004 biennial convention in Toronto. We're still waiting.

The objective of the public awareness campaign is to alert the public that urgent changes are needed to add more nurses to deliver the care that patients in Ontario need, and indeed expect and deserve. This government has an obligation to remedy the excessive workloads of nurses, which are leading to stress, absenteeism and increased workplace injury and illness, as all those factors ultimately prevent them from providing quality patient care. I have heard first-hand how much nurses suffer when they know they are unable to provide the care that they know their patients need for these reasons, because of short staffing. Some of them go home at the end of their shift and cry at night because they know they cannot provide that kind of care under these circumstances.

This government also needs to attract more students into nursing schools by reinstating the free tuition plan for nurses that was cancelled by the Liberal government in March 2004. This program would have compensated nursing students for their tuition costs to complete nursing programs in exchange for working in underserved areas after graduation. The program had barely got underway before the Liberal government cancelled it and cancelled an important opportunity to attract students to this profession.

Although the minister announced a tiny step in the right direction today, New Democrats are urging the Liberal government to keep its promise and start hiring the number of nurses they promised to hire during the election campaign. This is too important an area to see this government break this essential promise to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: There is an enormous amount of chatter in the chamber. Before I proceed to the next matter on the agenda, I would like members to settle down a bit.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. I want to remind you of some of the promises Dalton McGuinty made during the last election campaign. Promise 200: We will work with farmers to get our nutrient management rules right. Promise 205: We will help farmers manage nutrients and protect our drinking water. Promise 210: We will guarantee a strong Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Minister—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Erie-Lincoln is distracting from your question by a prop that he placed on there. Could I ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to take that prop away.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Durham. Could I get some order in the chamber, please.

Leader of the official opposition?

Mr Runciman: I hope the minister can remember the first part of the question. Promise 210: We will guarantee a strong Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Farmers in Ontario now know these promises were made to be broken. Mr McGuinty slashed your budget by 20%. You transferred enforcement under the Nutrient Management Act from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of the Environment, over the strong objection of farmers. You've cut research funding for genetics, as well as the municipal outlet drainage program. You've clearly allowed the Toronto voices around the cabinet table to diminish your ministry. Why aren't you doing your job? Why aren't you standing up for farmers?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): There's a word that I'd love to use for a government that cut—it was quoted in the Toronto Star today. When you were in government, you cut \$100 million from the budget of agriculture, so don't stand up and lecture me.

We made it very clear. Tomorrow, we're having the first Premier's summit in agriculture. We have provided \$20 million for nutrient management assistance. We followed through on our commitment to implement Justice O'Connor's recommendation 11, that the Ministry of the Environment should be responsible for compliance

with the Nutrient Management Act. We've delivered on \$64 million in transition assistance. We've provided \$30 million in BSE assistance and \$7 million to provide increased slaughter capacity in this province. We stood up and defended supply management in Geneva this past summer. We are moving on the repeal of the edible oils act, an issue that has dragged on for three years, and it's as a result of your inaction when you were in government. We're moving ahead.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Mr Minister, you and the Minister of the Environment have been quoted often in Hansard stating that the implementation of the Nutrient Management Act must be accompanied by an appropriate amount of funding for the farmers. Justice O'Connor made it one of the recommendations to your government. Your government has stated plainly that all the recommendations will be put into effect, yet the only funding announcement we've seen from you has been a pittance.

We've heard from two major commodity groups, two of the commodities that will be most affected by the first phase of nutrient management, that the cost of implementation of the Nutrient Management Act to their operation will far surpass the money you have proposed. These organizations have gone so far as to imply that if the funding from you does not better reflect the real cost of implementation, they are willing to suggest to their members that they not abide by the act at all.

Minister, are you going to stand up for the farmers and provide more funding to help them abide by the law, or are you going to let them down and see water quality suffer?

Hon Mr Peters: If \$20 million is a pittance, then the Tories didn't put a single cent on the table.

Justice O'Connor made it very clear in his report: We need to deal with the largest agricultural operations first. We're following through on that commitment with the support for the 1,200 largest farms. We commissioned a study from the George Morris Centre, and we didn't print our study on purple paper like you did. We made it available to the farmers of Ontario. You denied the farmers of Ontario access to the true cost of the implementation of the nutrient management legislation. We were straight up, because we know that the implementation of nutrient management is a very expensive measure, between \$250 million and \$600 million. We're going to get it right.

The Minister of the Environment and I met with the nutrient management advisory committee last week to ask them to consider, as we move forward with the implementation of all farms, that we bring the source water protection to ensure the alliance of the nutrient management legislation and source water legislation, because it doesn't matter how big a farm it is, we're going to deal with it.

Mr Hardeman: The commodities most affected by the implementation of phase 1 of the Nutrient Management Act have already stated that they will instruct their members to circumvent the law if you don't come up

with more money to help them out. They know that \$20 million is a far cry from what's needed. But that isn't the only problem farmers have in making their operations more environmentally friendly.

The Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Act will also affect farms by creating more red tape, more inspections and more costs of doing business. Again, you are asking the farmers of this province to foot the bill, as you have not indicated the level that they will receive.

Minister, if farmers are already willing to break the law because of insufficient funding for the implementation of the Nutrient Management Act, are you going to stand up for the farmers and provide them with adequate funding for the water source protection act, or are you willing to see our environment suffer once again?

Hon Mr Peters: The only time the environment suffered in this province was when the Conservatives ruled this province for the past nine years. We saw what happened: the cuts to meat inspection, the cuts to environmental inspection. That was a government that didn't respect the environment. We respect the environment. We're moving forward on the nutrient management legislation and we're moving forward on source water protection.

As I said, if the former minister had been listening, we met with the nutrient management advisory committee as to how we move forward with source water protection and its alliance with nutrient management. I'm extremely disappointed in this member, who is advocating to farmers in this province that they go out and break the law. It's very—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm going to ask the members to please come to order and stop shouting across to each other.

1420

ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of the Environment: You have introduced Bill 133, the spills bill, which would levy fines without due process and create a reverse onus, a guilty-until-proven-innocent process for companies. On introduction, you said, "Company officials would be held more liable.... It would put the onus on corporate directors and officers to prove that they took all reasonable steps to comply with environmental requirements. If convicted, they could face jail time of up to five years." Do you still stand by your statement, Minister?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I think it's important that I take the opportunity to correct the honourable member. The act that was introduced, Bill 133, is about environmental penalties. Fines are levied by the courts of Ontario. The penalties, if this act is passed, would be directed to a fund that would provide support to communities that have been affected by a spill event.

I would just like to say for the record, as well, with regard to the bill that was introduced, that we have

comments from people, and I think it is important for the people of Ontario to understand that Robert F. Kennedy Jr, who is the president of the Waterkeeper Alliance, has said, "This announcement signals a renewed commitment to enforcing Canada's environmental laws and an end to the race to the bottom for lower standards in North America."

We're very proud of this initiative. We believe it demonstrates our commitment to protecting the environment, and ensuring and dealing with a spill event in an effective and fair manner.

Mr Barrett: Minister, we know your track record on the spills bill: penalties without due process; guilty until proven innocent. Your bill would "put the onus on corporate directors and officers to prove that they took all reasonable steps."

In 2003, Royal Polymers, a subsidiary of a company of which the Minister of Finance was a director, spilled into the St Clair river. A former director sits at your cabinet table. Do you feel that the Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, should be held to the same standard you are setting for other directors: guilty until proven innocent? Will your government hold him, Minister Sorbara, to the same standard and ask Greg Sorbara to resign?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Bill 133 is about ensuring that when spill events happen in Ontario, for communities that have been affected—communities that would have to turn off their water intake, that would be required to supply bottled water to schools, to hospitals and to long-term-care facilities—there will now be a fund established that they will be able to access.

Our government believes that when these events happen, it shouldn't be the municipalities or the people in the communities that pay for this; it should be the polluter that pays. If you spill in Ontario, you have to pay the consequences. That's what the penalties are about. If an investigation results in fines, ultimately they are resolved in the courts, but penalties are to ensure that people in the communities of Ontario who have been affected by spills are compensated.

Mr Barrett: Minister, your penchant for ignoring due process in favour of a reactive penalty-based approach to environmental issues is now well established. I'm not sure that even Justice O'Connor called for such a guilty-until-proven-innocent law. Your spills advisory task force certainly didn't. Even the Koebel brothers are considered innocent until proven guilty.

You said you will introduce source water protection legislation before the year's end. Will you commit to this House today that your source water protection bill will not levy fines, penalties or premiums on farmers and landowners? Minister, will you tell the House today, "No penalties; no fines"?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: It was really quite extraordinary that the Ministry of the Environment posted the draft source water protection legislation on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry. We are committed to being open and transparent. It is not usual that a government would post draft legislation so that the public of On-

tario—yourself and members of your community—have had an opportunity to review what we propose to introduce. We've received comments. We will look to address some of those, if possible. But at no place in that draft legislation have we talked about environmental penalties. They are totally separate.

The honourable member may want to defend polluters in the province, but our government is about protecting the environment and protecting the health and well-being of our communities. In Ontario, under this government, if you spill, you pay.

AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. This is the report from the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Environmental Defence. It shows that environmental pollution is getting worse across Canada, and Ontario spews out the most toxic pollution of all. In fact, what it shows is that by any measure, whether monitoring, enforcement or incentives to cut pollution at the source, Ontario isn't doing enough.

Last week the Provincial Auditor said you need to take more drastic action if Ontario is to meet its national and international commitments for cleaner air. Premier, 15 months ago you said, "We will ensure cleaner air and safer water for Ontario." Fifteen months later, why is pollution getting worse under your government?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm delighted to receive the question and delighted to report to the people of Ontario that we are making great inroads when it comes to protecting their water and their air quality. Let me tell you about just a few of the things we have done, and I'm sure that in a supplementary the minister will want to add to this.

First of all, with respect to our internal matters, we have increased the operating budget for the ministry by 12.5%. That's back to the level it was a decade ago. We've already fulfilled 24 individual recommendations arising from the Walkerton inquiry. We have hired 33 more water inspection staff, increasing the number by 25%. We have the toughest new standards for trucks and buses that use diesel fuel in North America. We have invested over \$200 million in public transit, and of course we have our new gas tax. We made a joint announcement of \$1 billion to the city of Toronto for public transit. I've personally taken our clean air message to both Washington and New York City. We are moving forward with a very aggressive plan to eliminate coal-fired generation, and we've done that in just 14 months.

Mr Hampton: Premier, this is your budget, and what it details is a 12% cut to the Ministry of the Environment.

A key finding of yesterday's report is "the dramatic rise in anti-pollution rhetoric from governments," and we've heard some of your government's rhetoric.

Here is the Provincial Auditor's report from last week. This is what he found. He said that the air quality index

that you measure air pollution with doesn't work, that your Drive Clean strategy is broken, that less than one quarter of the pollution standards have been adequately updated, that government-sanctioned air pollution is rampant because certificates of approval haven't been updated.

During the election, you said you would be "cracking down" on pollution, but the numbers show that quite the opposite is happening. Premier, where's the crackdown?

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Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the minister wants to speak to this.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I just want to clarify for the people of Ontario that the budget at the Ministry of the Environment has increased by 12.5% under our government. I'd like to remind the leader of the third party that in 1991, when the NDP came to power, the budget of the Ministry of the Environment was \$824 million, and in 1994 it was \$352 million, a cut of \$500 million. That's what happened under the NDP.

I do want to talk about our government's initiative to improve air quality. Last spring I announced a five-point air plan. We have placed caps on NO_x and SO_x. We've expanded those caps to include six new industrial sectors. We are committed to improving the modeling, the measurement standard, that we use in the province of Ontario. Right now, the modeling that is used is 30 years old. We are committed to updating that and getting us into the 21st century.

Mr Hampton: Minister, obviously you haven't read the report. What this report says is that Ontario is the biggest polluter. What the Provincial Auditor said is that many of the programs that you talk about now aren't effective.

You need to read page 12 of your own budget, because page 12 of your own budget says that your government is going to cut the Ministry of Environment by 12% more. After all the cuts that happened under the Conservatives to the Ministry of the Environment, the McGuinty government is going to cut it more.

A very simple question, Minister: What happened to your government's promise to crack down on pollution? Or is that just another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The biggest cut to the Ministry of the Environment occurred under the NDP government, and we do not intend to duplicate that. Our priority is very clear.

We have implemented a five-point plan for cleaner air. We have committed to replacing coal-fired generation in the province, which is going to improve our air quality. We have committed two cents of our gas tax for public transit, which is going to reduce the number of cars that are on our highways. We are committed to an ethanol strategy. This is cleaner gas for the people of Ontario, and this is keeping a campaign commitment. It's going to be the equivalent of removing 200,000 cars from our roadways in 2007 when we have the 5% ethanol content in our gasoline.

These are some of the actions that this government has taken. In my opinion, and I know in the opinion of many across Ontario, they are delighted to see that this government has placed the environment as a priority area and is taking actions to demonstrate that.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: Premier, due to your government's inaction, Ontario is in danger of losing a project that would literally put new life into the province's aerospace industry. Some time over the next two weeks, Bombardier will decide where to do the final assembly of their new C series commercial jet. Securing this project would create about 2,500 jobs—good jobs, technology jobs. The problem is that the Toronto area is in competition for the contract with Northern Ireland, with Montreal, and with two US states that all enjoy the backing of their senior levels of government. Meanwhile, your government is missing in action.

Premier, time is running out. Will you act now to ensure that this vital economic project is going to come to Ontario, or are you going to be missing in action on this one too?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): In addition to the tremendous successes that we are having with respect to our auto sector strategy, we have been working very diligently on this file as well. I can tell you that the Minister of Finance has spoken directly with Mr Tellier. I can tell you that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has been pursuing the matter very actively. I can tell you that less than two hours ago I spoke with Mayor Miller, and one of the subjects that we covered was this matter specifically. I can tell you that we're paying very close attention to this matter and working diligently to ensure that we get our fair share of that business.

Mr Hampton: Premier, that was the answer that your Minister of Economic Development and Trade gave a couple of weeks ago, and all we've seen is Mayor Miller and other people who want this project to succeed running up the warning lights. We've seen no action from your government, yet you promised, "The Harris-Eves government did little to encourage the innovative industries and companies that fuel growth and create good, well-paying jobs. We will support our key business clusters with smart investments in strong, sustainable growth."

Premier, this is a project that is expected to generate over \$250 billion of economic activity over the next 20 years. We know that Quebec has a plan; we know that the American states are out there advocating; we know that Great Britain is advocating on behalf of northern Ireland, and they actually have a plan. What's your plan?

Hon Mr McGuinty: To the minister.

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I'm happy to report to the leader of the third party that, in fact, I had a discussion

with the Minister of Industry for Canada. We had a very interesting discussion about the aerospace industry in this country and what we were talking about is developing a Canadian strategy for this aerospace industry.

The aerospace industry went through a difficult period of time. It is bouncing back. We are seeing renewed investment, renewed proposals for additional facilities by Bombardier and other aerospace companies. Let's not forget that Ontario has a big stake in this. Tier-one suppliers are important players in aerospace in this country, and we're going to make sure that Ontario has a role to play when it comes to the aerospace industry in this country. We're going to make sure that tier-one suppliers are not forgotten, whatever happens in the future.

Mr Hampton: I heard a lot of rhetoric, but I didn't hear a plan. Look, the workers and de Havilland have come up with a plan. It's a plan for a \$2-billion investment. All they're asking is that the McGuinty government be part of that investment. They're not asking for a subsidy. This would be the kind of investment that the government of Quebec has put forward year over year in order to build a very successful aerospace industry in that province. It's an investment strategy that will build the kind of jobs that your government has talked about, but so far you're missing in action on this file.

So I ask you one more time: Workers have put forward a plan; the de Havilland plant has put forward a plan; when are you going to be part of that plan?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm going to ask the member from Windsor-St Clair and the member from St Catharines to come to some order so I can hear the leader of the third party.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It's his only opportunity these days to say anything.

Mr Hampton: I appreciate that the Minister of Tourism doesn't get much opportunity to speak in the House any more.

The workers have put forward a plan. The de Havilland plant has put forward a plan. They're asking Ontario to be a co-investor. They're not asking for a subsidy; they're asking you to invest to build the future of the aerospace industry here in Ontario. Are you prepared to be part of that plan, or are you just going to talk around the edges?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I can tell the leader of the third party, we're going to be a much bigger part of this plan than he ever was. I talked to the CAW workers about this several months ago and I recall when, in recent days gone by, the leader of the third party, referring to the CAW said, "I'm not even going to talk to those guys. They could blow your mind speaking to them." He ignored them completely.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Apparently he didn't heed his own advice.

Hon Mr Cordiano: He didn't even heed his own advice; that's true. Now he says, "Where's your plan?" Let me reassure the leader of the third party, we have a

plan, just as we've had a plan for the auto investment strategy that's going forward. We have a plan for the aerospace industry, and I'll tell you right now, whatever comes forward, we will be a part of it, especially tier-one suppliers in Ontario that are an important part of the aerospace industry in this province.

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WATER QUALITY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

A question to the Minister of the Environment: Your threat to implement regulation 170, which would require overly strict and costly testing of private wells, is leaving many in rural Ontario worried. Churches, community halls, trailer parks and campgrounds, to name a few, are extremely concerned about the cost of complying with this regulation. Yet—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I've been warning the members about coming to order since we started question period. I will now start naming members if I can't get order in question period. I'd also remind the members that there's only one Speaker. I don't want individuals to be jumping up and telling me who is out of order and who is not out of order. I will detect that. As far as I'm concerned, quite a few of you are out of order. I'd like some order as we proceed with question period.

The leader of the official opposition.

Mr Runciman: My colleagues suggest that the Liberals are laughing at what they're doing to rural Ontario, and that's probably true.

Minister, you've remained clear about this regulation: You're going to enforce it. Private well owners will have to pay this heavy price; it's just a matter of when. Your likely opponent for a nomination in the election, Ernie Parsons, has been clear that he opposes this regulation and the \$1,000-per-week cost to private well owners that comes with it.

Ernie Parsons is doing his job. He's standing up for his constituents, many of whom could never afford this kind of expense. You're clearly taking a page out of Steve Peters's book and are more interested in telling your community, "The McGuinty government knows best." How can you justify that position?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I will agree with the honourable member that Ernie Parsons is doing a splendid job. But I can't believe the honourable member is asking me this question, because he would have been the chair of cabinet who signed this regulation.

What I'm trying my very best to do is clean up the mess this regulation has wreaked across the province of Ontario. His government didn't consult, didn't consider, didn't research the impact this regulation would have in rural and northern Ontario. My ministry has taken on that task. We have had consultations, and we are committed to getting it right this time. We're going to take the time to do it right for the people.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Supplementary, the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I say to the minister, it would have been the member for Leeds-Grenville who was the first one challenging our government to come up with the money to pay for it.

Here's the problem: The Minister of Agriculture isn't standing up for rural Ontario; you're not standing up for rural Ontario. Reg 170 will have huge and consequential effects for church halls, for legions, for trailer parks. Why won't you listen to rural Ontario? Why won't you listen to Conservative MPPs? Why won't you listen to Ernie Parsons? Rumours are rampant throughout eastern Ontario that because Ernie Parsons is speaking up for rural Ontario, you and Dalton McGuinty will seek retribution, retaliation and revenge when it comes to his nomination at the next election. Prove me wrong. Stand in your place, join all of us and say that you'll put your money where your mouth is and financially support rural Ontario on reg 170. Will you do that?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I am delighted to have this opportunity to say to the people of Ontario that this Ministry of the Environment and this government are going to get reg 170 right this time. We have consulted rural Ontario. I have asked the Advisory Council on Drinking Water Quality and Testing Standards to provide me with recommendations on how we can best implement this regulation, because for this government the bottom line is that we want to assure the people in rural and northern Ontario that the water that comes out of their taps is safe. We want to make sure that the regimen that's put in place is reliable and affordable.

Those are the recommendations I look forward to receiving from the advisory council. They have been in 11 locations across Ontario, consulting with Ontarians on this very important matter, and I'm delighted that we have this opportunity—

The Speaker: New question.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Let's get the member for St Catharines settled a bit first before I ask the member for Niagara Centre to put his question forward.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Finance: Not a week goes by that we aren't confronted with another private insurance horror story in this province, whether it's hundreds of millions a year in secret commissions, kickbacks to brokers or unheard of new exorbitant profits, in a climate where homeowners' policies are sky-high in terms of the premiums. Now we discover that homeowners, families who own and live in homes across this province that are designated heritage properties, are confronted with increases of 100% to 200% to 300% in the premium they were paying before that designation. It's the same house, same foundation, same bricks, same mortar, same roof, same wiring, but heritage designation jacks up the insurance premiums and

punishes these homeowners to the tune of two or three times what they were paying before. How can you justify that, minister responsible?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): The very issue my friend raises is something we have already looked into. Thus far, I can tell him, the members of this House and the people of Ontario that we've found no evidence of premiums going up because of a heritage designation.

What I can tell my friend is that in many sectors, and in particular the auto sector, we are seeing a dramatic reduction in premiums, consistent with the policies and programs of this government, and we are seeing increased competition in all sectors of the industry.

The third point is that where we see abuse, we are able to act urgently. In the case of commissions, we were able to achieve a voluntary compliance with absolutely the highest standards in Canada, if not North America, in public disclosure of all commissions paid to brokers.

Mr Kormos: Minister, you are seriously misinformed. Only this morning, one of the NDP research staff was speaking with a broker, and the broker spent a considerable amount of time on the telephone trying to rationalize the increased premiums that homeowners are required to pay once their properties are designated as heritage properties. What a disincentive to Ontarians out there, to families who work hard, who invest a great deal of their sweat equity and their money as stewards of important pieces of Ontario's history. What an incredible mess.

And it's not just the premium increases. Bill and Heather Foote in Welland had their policy with ING cancelled once their home was designated a heritage property and were then forced back into the market again, shopping and being confronted with premiums that were two and three times what they were when ING had insured them, before ING's cancellation—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question?

Interjections.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Unanimous consent to—

The Speaker: Unanimous consent that you go back to your seat and stop disrupting the proceedings.

Could the member just put his question in 10 seconds?

Mr Kormos: Don't suggest it's not happening. It's happening across Ontario. What are you going to do about it?

Hon Mr Sorbara: The first thing I would say to my friend from Niagara Centre, with the greatest of respect, is that the quality of NDP research during the first 14 months of this Parliament has been very suspect. I want to tell him, secondly, that there are over 200 companies offering property and automobile and casualty insurance in this province and that the steps our government has taken have significantly increased levels of competition.

My advice to everyone looking for insurance is to make sure that they shop around and that they press very hard to make sure they're getting the lowest rate, because we know for sure that in Ontario today rates are coming down.

1450

NURSES

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is for the Minister of Health. Nurses are the backbone of the health care system. They provide essential services for the people in my riding of Huron-Bruce. The nurses of this province work very hard to ensure we get better when we are sick or hurt, and they do very good work. But they are faced with staff shortages, and nurses are increasingly starting to age out. The people of Huron-Bruce, along with all Ontarians, need to know how we are working to solve these problems. During the campaign, health care was among the top issues in my riding, and that included concerns about nursing shortages. We told the people of Ontario that we would hire more nurses to deal with this issue. Minister, how will the nursing strategy you have announced today help to alleviate the problem of nurse shortages in Ontario?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I am very pleased that today we were able to make a significant commitment, on top of the 2,400 full-time opportunities we've already created for nurses in Ontario, with a \$29.1-million strategy to support our new nursing grads. Some \$17.7 million of this will go to support new graduate nursing positions in hospitals and long-term-care homes to provide three months of full-time clinical setting employment for our nurses as a bridge to employment; in addition, paying \$1.4 million to our senior nurses to help mentor those newcomers, and a \$10-million investment in our colleges and universities for clinical simulation equipment that will provide much more enhancement for nurses in the schooling portion of their service.

Today I had the opportunity to be at St Joseph's Health Centre in Toronto with Joan Lesmond, president of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, who said the following: "We applaud the government for hearing—and heeding—RNAO's call for more full-time work for registered nurses, better support for new graduates, and improved clinical education for students."

Mrs Mitchell: Minister, nurses are so vital to our health care system, and it is very good to hear that we are taking steps to ensure that they have the resources they need to succeed and that their hard work is being acknowledged. I can tell you it is a welcome change from being referred to as Hula Hoops.

You mentioned that you will track to make sure the money being allocated today will be reflected in new nurses. The constituents in my riding are also very concerned with transparency and accountability. Minister, how will you do this, and why are these accountability measures so important to the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member asks an excellent question, one that has challenged previous Ministers of Health, who saw funding announcements and the flow of funds sometimes affect an institution's

bottom line but not necessarily go to the area for which they were intended.

We certainly changed that pattern with respect to accountability agreements and signoffs. In any instance where the government of Ontario is flowing resources to a hospital or long-term-care home for a particular intent, they have very specific requirements to report back. In the instance where there is unionized employment, we've added an even more significant accountability requirement, which is that the leadership of that union is also asked to sign back on the information to verify indeed that any dollar that is sent to an Ontario health care institution for a particular purpose is spent on that. That really is designed to address the reality that the previous government, while well-intentioned in this area, often sent money that did not achieve the desired result.

WATER QUALITY

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. You have stated that regulation 170/03 is flawed. Your response was to appoint this advisory council to travel through the province and get feedback from the people. Well, the feedback you received in rural Ontario was very, very clear: You cannot proceed with the implementation of this regulation as written. Your response has been to delay it. Madam Minister, will you commit not to a delay, not to fancy catchphrases like "getting it right?" Will you commit to making substantive changes that reflect the reality of rural Ontario and its people?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to have an opportunity to clarify again for the people of Ontario that we are committed to clean water, that we are committed to improving regulation 170.

My question is, when his government signed regulation 170, why did they not consult with the people of Ontario? Why did they not consider the negative impact this regulation was going to have in rural Ontario and in northern Ontario? Why did they not consider and have public meetings, as our ministry has?

We have committed to doing that. We are going to get it right. It's going to take us time to do it, but we believe in taking the time that is required to ensure that at the end of the process we have a regulation that works for rural Ontario, that works for northern Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm trying to get the member from Don Valley East to quiet down a bit.

Supplementary?

Mr Yakabuski: I remind the minister that while in opposition, she wholeheartedly supported the legislation that encompasses this regulation. I remind the House of that.

This government has two ways of dealing with issues: (a) they blame it on the previous government, or (b) they

simply hide and delay and delay and delay until the temperature drops around the issue.

The people in rural Ontario can't accept a delay. All that the minister is saying to those people in rural Ontario is, "Do you know what? We're not cancelling the execution, but I'm sending the hangman on vacation." That's not good enough. We in rural Ontario need to know that changes are going to be made. If not, it will exact an unbearable toll on people in rural Ontario. Will you make those changes?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Reg 170, as it is written now, will exact an unbearable toll on the people of rural Ontario. That's the regulation you wrote. My question to you is, why did you write it that way? Our government is committed to fixing it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member from Oxford, the member from Nepean-Carleton and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I'm going to warn you one more time.

We were at the response from the minister.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I share the frustration of the people of Ontario. It takes a great deal of time when regulations are poorly written, badly written. It takes a lot of time to get it right, to fix it. It takes time to consult; it takes time to consider impacts. I'm proud to say that our government is prepared to make that commitment and take the time to do it right, because we want a regulation that will work in rural Ontario.

We are committed to ensuring that communities have access to safe drinking water.

1500

WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Women's health services are at risk because of the directions you are making Ontario hospitals follow. Under your budget formula, clinical services primarily intended for women can be reduced or eliminated, services like abortion, obstetrics, birth control, fertility clinics and postpartum services. Women's College Hospital has to reduce programs by 25%. The Peterborough Regional Health Centre is eliminating the breast-feeding clinic and post-natal mood disorder clinic housed at its Women's Health Care Centre.

Postpartum services are already limited, but in the shadow of recent tragic events, the loss of any program that helps mothers experience postpartum symptoms is extremely troubling. You still have a window of opportunity to preserve these programs that impact half of adult Ontarians. Will you today designate these women's health services as protected?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think it's important to remind the honourable member of a couple of things, and I appreciate the question. The first is that each hospital in Ontario will receive more resources this year than last. I think the second thing that's important to note is that we

are still at the earliest stages of a process that the House probably got a bit tired of me talking about a few weeks back, but I acknowledge that it is a lengthy process.

There is a review going on of balanced budget plans that have been submitted. While the honourable member does cast information in a circumstance to make it seem as if those decisions have been taken, that has not yet occurred. More to the point, we are seeing, frankly, some good opportunities for programs that have been operated in hospitals to find a more appropriate setting in the community and we're examining all of those on a case-by-case basis. There's a lot to examine, for sure. I just want to give the assurance to the honourable member that not everything she has heard heretofore is likely to transpire.

Ms Churley: Minister, you know as well as I do that these programs are in scarce supply in the community, if at all, and people can't turn to programs that don't exist. They can't be built overnight in the community. Women turn to the expert care at women's health centres, centres that will be decimated with these pending cuts. The problem is, these programs are not on the mandated list, so when hospitals are being told they have to cut, where do they turn but to programs that aren't mandated?

I'm asking you to assure us today that those postpartum clinics and other vital services for women will be put on the mandated list so that they will not be on the chopping block, clear and simple. Women need those assurances today, more than ever. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I will do is continue to work through a process which has been well-established to date, and that is that we are required, as a government, to sign off on any plans that come forward. The honourable member raises issues about a variety of programs which may have been offered up by hospitals. But the point I'm making, and that I seek the honourable member to hear, is that we have a considerable amount of work to do within the ministry before any of those decisions are taken.

When I spoke about community in my earlier answer, it wasn't to suggest, necessarily, that there's a capacity at the community level now, but rather that one of the things we are seeing as we review the balanced budget plans of hospitals is that some programs, which are better suited at the community level, have been absorbed in hospitals. We're also seeking the opportunity to see where it might be appropriate to better situate those programs at the community level.

On a case-by-case basis, we're working through these. I appreciate the honourable member for bringing these important matters to my attention today.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): My question is for the Attorney General, minister responsible for democratic renewal. Minister, you recently announced that the government will review the first-past-the-post electoral system by empowering a citizens' assembly to research and examine alternative

electoral models in use around the world. What guarantee do we have that the work of the citizens' assembly will be given serious consideration, and that Ontarians will have an opportunity to truly have their voices heard?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for the question. I'm very proud that just over two weeks ago the Premier announced that we will be having a citizens' assembly on electoral reform, the first of its kind, the first opportunity, really, to consult citizens on our electoral system since Confederation.

The idea is to let a citizens' assembly, which will be randomly selected and will in fact at some point have an opportunity to hear from citizens as well, look at our electoral system. If they recommend alternatives, then we've committed to having a referendum on that within this mandate. If they recommend that in fact we should keep the system we have, then we will do so. But it will be up to the citizens to decide. It will be in their hands.

Mr McMeekin: Minister, that's exciting to hear. I'm certainly pleased that our government is taking steps to address this democratic deficit in Ontario, in addition to the measures we're taking to address our fiscal deficit, neither of which the previous government had the courage to tackle.

Let me just say on a personal note that I have initiated local citizens' assemblies in my communities to help me become better informed about the concerns and challenges experienced in my riding, and I truly believe that listening to citizens in a structured way has made me a better MPP. Minister, can you tell us just a bit more about how the people will be selected to sit on the citizens' assembly and what model, if any, the Ontario citizens' assembly will reflect?

Hon Mr Bryant: I thank the member. In many ways, the assembly is following the lead of people like you, MPPs who have turned to the citizenry for some assistance, direction, input and feedback. I know you've had that in place for many years before, in opposition, and I think when you were mayor as well. It has always, I know, given you that ability to know that every day you're here you are getting input from your community. So too the idea here is that we're going to be hearing from citizens. Far be it from politicians just to be the ones to determine the future electoral system. Rather, we are turning to the citizenry.

The way in which we put together this assembly—to some extent, we'll learn the lessons from the BC citizens' assembly—will be a random selection of people. We'll need assistance from the chief electoral officer and we'll certainly have gender balance on the assembly. We look forward to more on this in the future.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, according to US Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow from Michigan, there are now over 400

garbage trucks crossing the border daily. The number of trucks has more than doubled since you took office. On November 15, Senators Levin and Stabenow asked the homeland security office to take immediate action to stop garbage from crossing the border, as they believe it is a homeland security risk. I'm sure this is of serious concern to the government.

Minister, can you tell us how many truckloads of garbage are travelling to Michigan every day and why that number has more than doubled since you became the government?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I believe the honourable member has already talked about the number of trucks, but I'm very happy to respond to the member today that our goal for municipalities in Ontario is to divert 60% of their waste from landfill. We believe we must do a much better job of not sending as much waste to landfill. We have posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry a discussion paper, a white paper. We have sought input on how we can better implement diversion measures and some recommendations for municipalities on what they need in order to achieve those goals.

I want to cite particularly the city of Toronto and the implementation of their green bin program. It's been very well received and very successful and will take them well along the way to their 60% diversion goal, which will have an impact on the number of trucks that are crossing the border with Toronto garbage.

1510

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Minister of the Environment: Minister, there's a plan for Toronto garbage to be diverted to Haldimand county. Edwards dump wants to expand their daily fill rate by 5,000% to receive GTA waste. Haldimand county council unanimously endorsed a motion requesting that you conduct a full environmental assessment on the Edwards dump. The site is located on a wetland, a slough forest near Pike and Oswego creeks. They feed into Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. It's two miles from the Grand River, and it's near abandoned gypsum mines. I'm told the proposed expansion—it's a 15-acre, 29-foot-deep hole—will affect surface and groundwater, in contravention of your draft source water protection legislation.

The Speaker: Question.

Mr Barrett: Minister, the question is, will you grant Haldimand county's request for a full environmental assessment?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: There has already been a decision made with regard to designating the Edwards site for a full environmental assessment. The honourable member should know that this is not an expansion of the site particularly, but it is going to amend the rate at which the site is filled. I'm not prepared to speculate on where that waste is going to come from. That is not part of the consideration that we make.

I think it is important as well, and I'm very happy to share with the House, that on December 7, the director who has the responsibility for approving the modified fill

rate has posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry that particular proposal and is inviting comments.

I say to the honourable member that I believe the Ministry of the Environment is exercising its responsibility in an appropriate way, and the community does have an opportunity to make their concerns known through the EBR process.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the minister of Scandinavian studs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Member from Timmins-James Bay, would you tell me to whom you're addressing this question?

Mr Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, on a more serious note.

Minister, you will know that the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission has a mandate in northern Ontario to make sure there is transportation available to the people of the northeast. You'll also know that the town of Hearst has lost bus service from seven days a week between Thunder Bay and Hearst down to three days a week. That means, if you've got to travel for a hospital appointment, if you have to travel for business, if you have to travel for anything, you're stuck with only three days of service out of Hearst.

My question to you is simply this: Are you prepared to have the ONTC step in, as they are the agency responsible, and make up for the services that have been lost between Thunder Bay and Hearst?

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): This is a very, very serious issue that the member brings up. It's about our ability in northern Ontario to have proper transportation.

But there's an issue he brought up before the question that I think we must address: The issue of the safety of northern highways shouldn't be made light of. We will use the best technology possible to ensure the safety of motorists in northern Ontario. I would suggest to the member, for whom I have a lot of respect, that he take the issue of safety on northern highways a lot more seriously when it comes to people using northern highways during the winter months.

Certainly, I want to tell him that we take the issue of reduced transportation services very seriously as well. The ONTC staff is working aggressively on that.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

They keep coming because the government doesn't seem to want to listen, so we'll have to just keep reading them in.

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I've signed that.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal Party plans to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000; and

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government has introduced Bill 63 amending the maximum allowable hours of work per week and other consequential amendments; and

"Whereas section 18 of the Employment Standards Act effectively denies members of trade unions greater benefits than what the act allows in their collective agreements:

"Therefore, let it be resolved that the Ontario Legislature further consult with trade unions before passing this legislation; and

"Let it be further resolved that the Ontario provincial Legislature amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, specifically section 18 of the act that pertains to hours free from work where there is a binding collective agreement in place; and

"Finally, let it be resolved that trade unions with collective agreements in place that provide 'a greater benefit' than what the act provides be able to continue to enforce their collective agreement subject to the approval of the Ontario Ministry of Labour."

It's signed by hundreds; I've affixed my signature as well. Page Evan is delivering it to the Clerk.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, since Bill 99 was passed in 1997 by the Harris government, the situation for injured workers with respect to income, recognition of their injuries by the compensation system, treatment by the employer and opportunities for re-employment has dramatically deteriorated; and

"Whereas employers have more power today to frustrate and intimidate injured workers and are less accountable for their actions; and

"Whereas employers are increasingly putting greater effort into avoiding reporting of claims and associated costs than into preventing injuries; and

"Whereas the compensation system is increasingly more concerned about minimizing costs for employers than ensuring full compensation for workers; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the provincial government to ensure fair and adequate compensation for workers and to ensure healthy and safe workplaces;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the provincial government to immediately:

"Change the name of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board back to the Workers' Compensation Board;

"Implement full cost-of-living protection for injured workers;

"Establish full coverage for all workers and all work-related disabilities and diseases under the compensation system;

"Abolish experience rating which encourages employers to, and rewards them for, hiding occupational injury and illness by giving them money back from their premiums;

"Enforce health and safety in the workplace by hiring more inspectors and sending them to workplaces without giving advance notice to the employer;

"Enforce employer re-employment obligations and abolish provisions which deem workers to be receiving wages from jobs they don't have;

"Conduct a complete review of the workers' compensation system in order to write new legislation which ensures fundamental benefits and rights for workers, including survivors of workers killed on the job, as called for in the CAW Jobs for Full Compensation platform."

I sign this petition and give this over to Nicholas.

PIT BULL LEGISLATION

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Attorney General under Bill 132 is proposing to ban pit bulls;

"Whereas the council of the corporation of the township of South Glengarry has expressed to the Attorney General two areas of legislation of significant concern:

"(1) The current proposal as worded would be an enforcement nightmare for, in our opinion, and that of many residents, no ticket charges could be upheld in the judicial process; and

"(2) The enactment of such legislation as we currently understand would place great strain on local municipalities both in monetary and physical terms;

"Therefore, we the undersigned respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Attorney General undertake consultation with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and have regard to the ratepayers of Ontario."

I support the petition and affix my signature.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I have affixed my signature, as I agree with this petition, and present it through Eric.

1520

WATER QUALITY

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a number of petitions signed by people from the Bruce Mines and Plummer Additional township area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has passed regulations regarding water quality; and

"Whereas that legislation has created financial crises in small communities; and

"Whereas those communities and their residents do not have the ability to cover the operating costs of the new legislation; and

"Whereas there are currently no provincial dollars for operating costs;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we request the provincial government immediately review water regulations and funding with regard to small communities before many are forced from their homes."

I agree with this petition and I'm signing it. I'm giving it to my page, Savannah, who has been representing us well here from Algoma-Manitoulin.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): "A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at

risk for medical conditions such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

"Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

"Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

"Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician."

I affix my name in full support.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and....

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the catchment area of the hospital;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

I'm going to give this petition to page Dever.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Cutting Services at Cambridge Memorial Hospital

"Whereas the Liberal McGuinty government has broken its election promise to increase health care funding and improve its quality; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has imposed a health tax, contrary to its election promise; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has delisted key, essential health services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has cut funding to Cambridge Memorial Hospital, resulting in the elimination of necessary and essential health services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal McGuinty government keep its election promises, reverse its health funding cuts and restore full funding at Cambridge Memorial Hospital to the following services that have been cut:

The ambulatory care chronic pain clinic, 10 alternate-level care beds, cardiac rehabilitation, fitness appraisals, fitness function, health and wellness consultations, menopause clinic, nutritional counselling services, occupational therapy services, osteoporosis program, physiotherapy clinic, smoking cessation, speech language practice groups, stress management, weight management, wellness works and day hospital, the microbiology department, nutrition and food services department cutbacks."

CASINO OPERATING AGREEMENT

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of the Niagara Falls Citizens for Democracy:

"Whereas the two commercial casinos in Niagara Falls are publicly owned; and

"Whereas Falls Management Co, a private company, has been contracted by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp to operate both Casino Niagara and the Niagara Falls casino resort; and

"Whereas the operating agreement between Falls Management Co and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp is not subject to public scrutiny; and

"Whereas no elected official in Niagara Falls has seen the operating agreement; and

"Whereas this lack of transparency is unacceptable in a free and democratic society;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take the steps necessary to make public the operating agreement between Falls Management Co and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp."

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs,

and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

This is signed by a number of my constituents in Mapleton township.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): We have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm going to give it to my good friend the page from Peterborough.

DEPOSIT RETURN

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition supporting deposit return in Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas Ontarians add a billion aluminum cans and other recyclables to landfill sites each year; and

"Whereas cans and bottles litter our parks, playgrounds and roadsides and can cause harm to the public, wildlife and the environment; and

"Whereas the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan already have deposit return programs in place; and

"Whereas total litter has been reduced by as much as 47% where deposit return programs have been implemented; and

"Whereas plastic products contribute 7% by weight and 30% by volume to municipal solid waste and plastics also make up a large proportion of litter on land, on shorelines and in waterways;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario pass legislation to establish a province-wide return collection system for beverage containers under a deposit-refund system requiring redeemed containers to be either refilled or recycled."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

BENEFIT AND PENSION INDEXATION

Mr Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 1985, all three political parties in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario agreed to enact full indexation (cost-of-living protection) in the Workers' Compensation Act; and

"Whereas the Canada pension plan is fully indexed annually; and

"Whereas in 1995, Bill 165 restricted indexation (cost-of-living protection) drastically of most benefits and pensions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We, the residents and taxpayers of Ontario, in support of all injured and disabled workers, spouses and their children, demand restoration of full indexation (cost-of-living protection) for all benefits and pensions retroactive."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N^o 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 18, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 106, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

The snail mail was slow.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Don't blame them.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 7, 2004, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Sorbara has moved second reading of Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1532 to 1537.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the table.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Oraziotti, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Craiton, Kim	McGuinity, Dalton	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hampton, Howard	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Tascona, Joseph N.
Churley, Marilyn	Martiniuk, Gerry	Witmer, Elizabeth
Eves, Ernie	Miller, Norm	
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 19.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 7, 2004, this bill is referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

BUDGET MEASURES ACT (FALL), 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (AUTOMNE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 6, 2004 on the motion for second reading of Bill 149, An Act to implement 2004 Budget measures, enact the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004 and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 149, Loi mettant en oeuvre

certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2004, édictant la Loi de 2004 sur la Société d'émission d'obligations de développement du Nord de l'Ontario et modifiant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 7, 2004, I am now required to put the question.

No, excuse me. I'd better tell you what you're voting on.

Mr Sorbara has moved second reading of Bill 149, An Act to implement 2004 Budget measures, enact the Northern Ontario Grow Bonds Corporation Act, 2004 and amend various Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Same vote? I heard a no. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1540 to 1545.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinity, Dalton	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Tascona, Joseph N.
Eves, Ernie	Martiniuk, Gerry	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 62; the nays are 20.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 7, 2004, this bill is ordered for third reading.

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ
PUBLIQUE RELATIVE AUX CHIENS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 132, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens pour accroître la sécurité publique relativement aux chiens, y compris les pit-bulls, et apportant des modifications connexes à la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Seeing none, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye".

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request the vote on the motion by Mr Bryant for second reading of Bill 132 be deferred until Thursday, December 9."

Signed by the chief government whip.

1550

GREENBELT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR
LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Resuming the debate adjourned November 17, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 135, An Act to establish a greenbelt area and to make consequential amendments to the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 and the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994 / Loi établissant la zone de la ceinture de verdure et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur la planification et l'aménagement de l'escarpement du Niagara, à la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges et à la Loi de 1994 sur la planification et l'aménagement du territoire de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Seeing none, is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I move that the bill go to general government.

The Deputy Speaker: So ordered.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK
AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(HEURES DE TRAVAIL
ET AUTRES QUESTIONS)

Mr Bentley moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to conduct this afternoon's debate on Bill 63 as follows: The time from the start of the debate to 5:55 pm shall be divided equally among the recognized parties, and at 5:55 pm or when the debate collapses, whichever is earlier, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Speaker: I want to congratulate the government House leader. After many months on the job, he's clipping at a good pace and finally getting some legislation passed. We're quite excited, and we want to congratulate him.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I'm pleased to rise and address third reading on this matter, because it was a campaign commitment to end the 60-hour work week and that's exactly what this legislation does. It's part of our strategy to ensure that this government protects the most vulnerable workers in Ontario and doesn't simply speak about their protection. This legislation is part of a strategy that includes an awareness strategy for both business and workers and an enforcement strategy to ensure that the Employment Standards Act protections are actually enforced.

As we saw recently, the Provincial Auditor's report suggested that since at least 1991 the Employment Standards Act was not being effectively enforced. It's time to get on with the job of protecting the most vulnerable workers in Ontario. That's exactly what we're doing.

What does this legislation do? We committed to end the 60-hour workweek. We committed to ensure that workers would have an effective right to choose whether they were going to work more than 48 hours a week or not.

What's the history of this matter? The protection in the Employment Standards Act existed for decades before it was eliminated by the previous government. What was that protection? That before any worker covered by the act would work more than 48 hours in a week, that worker would agree, and their agreement

would be supported by government oversight. Those two steps were crucial before any worker could be required to work more than 48 hours in a week.

The Tories, the previous government, in the Employment Standards Act, 2000, eliminated the requirement for government oversight. And what did that do? That effectively left the most vulnerable workers in society—those without any bargaining power, without any effective right to choose—without any support for their decision whether or not to work more than 48 hours in a week. We know that when you don't have an effective right to choose, you really don't have a right to choose at all.

We pledged to end the previous government's practice. We pledged to restore the historical protections, and that is exactly what this legislation does. It ensures that before any worker works more than 48 hours in a week, that worker must agree, and, secondly, the government must approve—essential protection, and that's what this legislation does.

Now, how does it do that? Let me speak to both the process and the substance, because the process is important.

Our government has made a commitment to reach out and listen to workers and employers, to find out what will work most effectively for all of the people of Ontario. Consistent with our commitment to end the 60-hour workweek, we said, "This is what we're going to do. Now give us advice on the best way to do it." And we received advice. We received advice in the form of 31 key labour-employer community stakeholder consultations. We received more than 30 submissions from various members of the public. We listened, and we heard two things: (1) that you need to provide government support, and (2) that you need to do so in a way that does not prevent business from effectively competing, not only provincially but nationally and internationally. We listened to the chamber of commerce. We listened to the CFIB.

What we've done in this legislation is ensure that when an employer applies for the right to work more than 48 hours in a week and that employer has the worker's agreement, what will happen is that the employer can apply not simply in writing, but by e-mail, by fax. It's not an application that will be sitting on a desk somewhere or on a computer, because the government makes a decision within 30 days or the employer and the worker can start the work. That is an effective and efficient way of extending the protection and at the same time ensuring that the application process will not unduly delay the business that we all need to go on in the province of Ontario. That is an effective compromise.

What else have we done in this legislation? We have provided for the regulatory ability to ensure that special circumstances such as, for example, remote mining situations can be dealt with effectively by regulation—very important because, as we know, the business and labour communities in the province of Ontario don't all have the same characteristics, so there are going to be special circumstances we're going to have to allow for.

This legislation provides us with that necessary scoped flexibility that didn't otherwise exist in the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

This legislation exists not in a vacuum, but as part of a three-pronged plan to protect the most vulnerable workers in Ontario. Part of the plan is legislative. Part of the plan is to increase awareness of the rights and responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act.

1600

What are we doing to increase awareness? First of all, to the businesses out there that have long complained they are faced with many different regulations, what are we ensuring? We are ensuring that we're going to enhance our ability to deliver easy-to-understand information about labour legislation and regulation to businesses in a form they can use. How are we doing that? Just a few weeks ago, we launched what's called the workplace gateway. It is now part of the Service Ontario system that my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Business Services formally launched several weeks ago.

For years, businesses have said, "Why don't you put easy-to-understand information on the computer so that from our desks we can get information about the Labour Relations Act or the Employment Standards Act, and if we have a question, we have a way of getting that answered without delving into the blue pages of the phone book?" If anyone has ever tried to find a number in the blue pages, they will know the frustration; if anyone has tried to find an answer, they will know it is not likely to be found in those blue pages. You would be lucky if you get an answer from a person, as opposed to a machine.

What this does is that the workplace gateway provides easy-to-use information, easy-to-understand answers to questions, on the computer, and if the answer isn't there, we have an e-mail capability and we have a 1-800 number. E-mail, call in, we'll give you the answer to the question, because the key is, if business understands, business is more likely to comply. That protects the workers, and that improves productivity for the business and for all the people of Ontario. That is an excellent way of ensuring that the system works more effectively.

I say to all those out there, use the workplace gateway and tell us what you think, because it's not designed for government; it's not designed for the ministry. It's designed for the use of businesses and the people of Ontario. If it could work more effectively, we'll change it, because we are committed to service. That's exactly what we're committed to, and that, frankly, is what we're going to achieve with this system.

What about the workers? One of the things we've heard for years is that workers come from all over the globe. They say the magic of the Olympic games is that it brings people from all over the world together in one place at one time. Well, in Ontario, we have people from all over the world in this province, not simply once every four years, but every day of the year. People have come from all over the world. They have brought their energy, their drive, their determination. They have helped build this province into the best you'll find anywhere.

Now when people come, they don't simply come with English or French as their first language, so one of the challenges for government is to ensure that those who arrive have a means of understanding what their rights are under legislation such as the Employment Standards Act. How can they be protected by the law if they don't know what it is? If their first language isn't English or French, how do we ensure they understand what the protections are under legislation such as the Employment Standards Act? It's such an important piece of legislation because it sets the bar below which no employer can go. The Employment Standards Act protects the most vulnerable in the province.

What have we done to ensure increased understanding and awareness of the Employment Standards Act protection? Just a few weeks ago, we announced that we have translated information under the Employment Standards Act into 19 additional languages, apart from English and French. That goes along with our outreach opportunity, our outreach process. We have gone to more than 100 community organizations, in all different communities—and I know the member opposite is desperate to hear this—to tell them how we can help, to find out from them how we can more effectively help. Now we can assist community organizations in serving their constituents. We can serve the people of Ontario directly, because we have information in 19 languages, either in hard copy or on computer.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Bentley: I know the member opposite is wondering why the NDP didn't do that years ago, but finally it's been done. This is a government that takes action, that doesn't just talk the talk but actually walks the walk, and that is absolutely crucial. But that is not all; there is absolutely more.

What about the question of enforcement? I know that questions have been asked. In fact, they were asked most recently in the auditor's report that studied a period of time from the NDP days in 1990-91. The auditor found that the Employment Standards Act had not been effectively enforced. So the question arises, what did the NDP do about it? Apparently nothing. What did the Tories do about it? Apparently nothing. We have changed that. We have said that where the facts warrant, enforcement is back in style, and that's exactly what we're going to do. Where the facts and circumstances warrant, there will be enforcement.

How are we doing this? First of all, our inspection process, rather than simply being reactive, is being proactive. We're going out, and we're going to do 2,000 proactive inspections, which the auditor's report said is the most effective way of extending the protection of the law. That's what we've been doing since April. In fact, a full six months before the auditor's report came out, we were doing that.

We're supporting our new enforcement initiatives with a ticketing regime. We have now made it possible for tickets to be issued under part I of the Employment Standards Act, which is the simplified procedural ticket-

ing regime. This will ensure the more direct and effective enforcement of the law under the Employment Standards Act.

As my time grows short, let me just conclude with a couple of comments.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Bentley: I know the member is anxious to hear, but I must conclude with a few comments.

We're going to be taking a look at other parts of the employment standards procedure to make it more effective, because it is crucial that the protections afforded, to those whose obligations they are and whose rights they are, by the Employment Standards Act are known and are effectively communicated, supported by legislation and effectively enforced.

Coming back to where I started, this legislation is an important enhancement of the legislative framework, an important means of ensuring that the hours-of-work provision in the Employment Standards Act that protects the most vulnerable in society is going to be effectively supported by government oversight—strong, effective and efficient ways of supporting the most vulnerable workers in society, and supporting business efficiency. That's good for workers, good for business and good for the people of Ontario.

I am pleased to conclude these remarks by saying that I hope the House will support this piece of legislation.

1610

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I will join this debate, the third reading of Bill 63, on behalf of our caucus today. This bill, regrettably, is going to form the foundation for a slide, as far as the provincial economy is concerned, because it starts to put back the red tape and the burdens on the businesses in Ontario.

Certainly, people are going to start to reconsider, as I have already heard, as to whether or not they want to expand their business here or whether they want to move their business south of the border, to Mexico or the United States. If you put this with Bill 144, we see a trend developing—a very dangerous trend, by the way—which we saw under the NDP between 1990 and 1995, when that regime created an environment that was very, very unfriendly to the creation of new jobs. In fact, we saw the loss of 10,000 jobs under the NDP government.

Bill 63 and Bill 144 are certainly heading us in that same direction. I've already heard from business owners who are exploring opportunities, in one instance to go to Mexico with 350 employees, another person looking at China because of the incentives that are offered there, meeting with another four businesspeople, again, who talk about the red tape, the bureaucracy and the fact that when you're a good employer in Ontario, you're not rewarded and you are put into the same barrel with bad apples and are forced to go through the red tape and take the measures that certainly don't make for an efficient operation of your business.

It's interesting as well, when we had the public hearings on this bill, that not one person came forward from

any side who supported Bill 63; not one delegation that spoke supported this particular bill. I hope this minister, as he moves forward, carefully considers the impact of future legislation. Our goal must always be to protect employees, but we also have to make sure there are jobs for these employees. Certainly the direction they're taking doesn't make that happen.

I also think it's interesting that in this legislation there is a piece that I certainly would support and that our caucus supports, and that is the requirement for employers to provide information to their employees about their rights under the Employment Standards Act. It's a great idea, and if it's in 14 different languages, it's certainly a great idea. However, this initiative, Bill 63, is completely contradictory when you take a look at Bill 144, which is going to take away information from employees with respect to posting in the workplace their rights and the process involved in decertification.

So we've got a government here that is sending out a very conflicting message with respect to, on the one hand, in this case, ensuring that employees are advised of their hours of work provisions, but on the other hand, in Bill 144, they're saying, "You're not entitled to information with respect to certification or decertification." So I'm afraid they're not only contradictory, but they're less than sincere in their desire to increase the amount of information that is provided to employees. I would urge this government to look more globally at this particular initiative regarding information and ensure that all employees, at all times, are provided with information about their rights under all the various statutes.

I also want to make the point that Bill 63 doesn't really make any significant changes. It does not end the 60-hour workweek. It only places a very unnecessary bureaucratic burden on law-abiding business owners. For example, if you take a look at section 4, it amends section 17 of the act and provides for the situation that where approval to go beyond 48 hours has been sought and not received, workers are allowed to work the increased hours for 30 days.

Subsection 17(4) sets out the criteria that will allow for a 60-hour workweek even if approval from the ministry is not received within the 30-day period after application.

Section 17.1 provides a mechanism for the employer to apply to the director for approval, allowing some or all of the employees to work a 60-hour workweek.

So for anyone who thinks that something different is happening here, it's not. It does not end the 60-hour workweek. What it does is simply add one more bureaucratic step to the process. It creates more work for compliant business employers in the province, while not taking steps that would be much more appropriate to respond to those employers who obviously are not abiding by the law. So it's a very conflicting message that they're sending out. It's window dressing, this whole piece of legislation to eliminate the 60-hour workweek, because it doesn't do anything of the sort.

The other thing this government is not recognizing is the need for flexibility in the modern workplace of today.

This government should have taken a look at the present policy that was in place, instead of hindering the economic potential of Ontario's businesses. The evidence that's been presented to the minister by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business showed that, since 2000 when we passed the Employment Standards Act, the hours of work, under our changes, remained steady. In fact, the good thing is it gives employers and employees the flexibility to be successful in an economic climate that demands it. Certainly, if you take a look at business throughout the province, there is a need for the sectors, which are much different than the traditional manufacturing sectors of the past, to be as flexible as possible in order to continue to be competitive in a global world. This bill simply adds the onerous task of filling out pages of paperwork, resulting in a less efficient business. There are obviously going to be some additional costs involved in implementation that are going to far outweigh anything else within this bill.

It's also interesting to note that the minister has claimed he has consulted with many stakeholders on this piece of legislation, as this government is so fond of doing, but, again, if there actually had been true consultation and the viewpoints of those consulted had been incorporated into the legislation, I believe we would have heard at least one stakeholder come forward during the committee hearings to tell us that they did agree with the bill. As I said a few minutes ago, we did not hear a single stakeholder, representing employers or employees or individuals, speak favourably about this bill. That demonstrates to me that this government did not do a very good job of consultation.

If you take a look at all of the legislation this government has been introducing, it has been overwhelmingly rejected by the relevant stakeholders. Take a look at the deal the government tried to impose on the doctors and the 60% rejection. I can remember the last time we negotiated a deal with the doctors, we had 66% supporting the agreement. That was when we were able to put into place the primary health care networks and move forward. We provided \$250 million in the budget of 2000 to get those started.

Take a look at their short-sighted decision to delist physiotherapy, chiropractic and optometry services. Well, basically what they've done is privatize those services. Again, there was no public support for that initiative; in fact, there was no consultation whatsoever with the professionals and the patients who are going to be impacted. I don't know when I've received so many thousands of names on petitions as I did at the point in time they made the decision to privatize physiotherapy, chiropractic and optometry services.

Regrettably, time and time again, although this government professes to embark and participate in consultation, the public response is that that's not happening. So I would recommend to the government that, as you move forward, if you're going to have consultation, you at least take the advice and the recommendations and incorporate them into the legislation that comes forward

to this House in the final readings, rather than just going through sham exercises where you don't incorporate.

I remember that happened with Bill 8 as well. There was lots of dialogue and lots of people wasted a lot of trees putting writing on paper, but there was very little change, if any, to the legislation.

If we take a look at this legislation, it's not achieving the goal. If anybody in this province thinks they will no longer be working 60 hours, or more than 60 hours, the government has fooled them. What we have here is a bill that is not supported by people in Ontario and that we as a party cannot support, because it doesn't do the job it is intended to do.

If we want to help vulnerable people, let's put in place the appropriate mechanism to do so. Let's not, with one fell swoop, bring out the baseball bat and make the working environment much more onerous for the good employers who are trying their best to create opportunities for young women and men and others in Ontario.

1620

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this political forum. It's 4:20 on Wednesday afternoon.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The Minister of Tourism has been waiting for my speech for the whole afternoon. I'm happy he's here, and I've got a couple of things to say.

The minister stands up so proudly talking about this bill, and I'm not quite sure what he's proud of. I was speaking to the member for Niagara Centre, Peter Kormos—because he was sitting throughout all of those hearings—and I said to him, "Peter, was there anybody in those hearings who supported the government?" He said no. Labour organizations didn't support this bill. Employers didn't support this bill. I am left wondering, who is supporting Mr Bentley, the Minister of Labour, and his bill, Bill 63? I am left to conclude that it's him, his colleagues, maybe some members of his family, maybe a couple of other Liberals to whom he is connected, but the people directly connected to this issue do not support him or his bill.

Employers don't support it, for different reasons. Labour unions don't support it. Who does? Presumably some mythical worker who exists out there, who is not represented by labour unions, who is independent and quite aware of Bill 63. They must be pushing Bentley, the Minister of Labour, on with this great, historic bill.

If you look through this bill, you wonder what's in it for the worker. I don't see anything. It's a new and improved Tory bill that will permit the employer to have the workers work beyond 60 hours. New and improved. Bentley, the Minister of Labour, gets up and says he got rid of the 60-hour workweek. That's what he said. It does nothing of the kind. He stood up to speak to this issue, didn't clarify it for the unions, and didn't clarify it for the workers or you citizens who might be retired and/or interested in this issue. He did nothing of the sort.

The member for Kitchener-Waterloo pointed out correctly, as we pointed out in the last debate we had on

this, that the 60-hour week the Tories had put in place remains. Not only that, but Bentley, the Minister of Labour, improves on it. How does he do that? First of all, I want to explain to those watching that if Bentley, the Minister of Labour, was interested in workers, he would have brought in a 40-hour workweek, which exists in many other jurisdictions. It exists because people were asking in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nunavut, Yukon, Northwest Territories. That, you'd think, would be an example that the Minister of Labour would use as a way of modernizing our work legislation in a way that would protect workers.

You didn't see the Minister of Labour do that. We don't have a 40-hour workweek, and he certainly did not eliminate the 60-hour workweek. In fact, employers now can, with the agreement of employees and with the agreement of the Minister of Labour, work beyond 60 hours. He says the employer can go and ask the employee, and if the employee doesn't want to work, he can say no. He's a lawyer, and he would know that there is no even relationship between an employer and an employee and that the employee has very little power to say to the employer, "I don't want to work." He knows because he is a lawyer who has been active in this field of labour relations and ought to know—"ought to know" is the language lawyers use—of that power imbalance between powerful employers and an employee who doesn't have much of a say in terms of being able to say no to the employer.

I'm puzzled by the fact that he has the strength to present this bill as if somehow he and his government are getting rid of the 60-hour workweek. How does he defend it? How can he pretend to do so when the reality and the facts speak against it? But he can stand there and say he got rid of the 60-hour workweek.

How do you do it? I know as a Liberal how you do it. You do it all the time. You make all sorts of claims all the time and you hope that people out there will believe you. The facts speak for themselves. The employee almost certainly in all cases will say yes if an employer asks him or her to work beyond the 60 hours, beyond the 44-hour workweek, beyond 48, beyond 50, beyond 60. But Bentley, the Minister of Labour, says, "Well, that's OK. Look, all the employee has to do is send in a letter." Now he requires them to send a written letter two weeks in advance if he or she says no. The previous bill didn't require two weeks' notice. But Mr Bentley, the Minister of Labour, says, "Now you need to give two weeks' advance notice in writing if you declare that you don't want to work more than 48 hours, 50, 60 or 65."

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): It's for their protection.

Mr Marchese: Oh, yes. The rump that now sits on the left says it's for the worker's protection. In the past, a worker could have said no and he didn't require two weeks' notice. Now you do.

I want the next Liberal member, when he or she stands up, to defend how you got rid of the 60-hour work-

week—please, any single person, man or woman, who's going to stand up next to defend Bentley, the Minister of Labour, and his desire and interest in getting rid of the 60-hour workweek when all you need is the employer to say, "Got to work more," and the employee to sign on the dotted line. Then you go to the Ministry of Labour, and what are they going to say? If the employer and the employee have a little agreement, what's the Ministry of Labour going to say, Monsieur Bentley, Minister of Labour? They're going to say, "No, because we are the watchdog of labour and workers"? Oh, yes, you nod. Why would they do that? If the employee signs on the dotted line and says, "Yeah, I'm willing, ready and able to work beyond 60 hours," and they've got an agreement between the two, the Ministry of Labour's going to say, "Now, we think that's inappropriate"? If your law permits it, what are they going to say?

I'd like you to get up again and respond to that, or send a little note to your next speaker saying, "Here's how Marchese is wrong." Just a little note would do.

1630

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): We already know you're wrong.

Mr Marchese: Please, stand up. We want the member from Perth to stand up to say how Marchese is wrong and how the member for Perth and Bentley, the Minister of Labour, are right.

Mr Wilkinson: You don't want me to stand up.

Mr Marchese: Yes, I do. I'd want any Liberal to stand up. I wait patiently to hear the arguments that they will be able to present.

Mr Bentley, the Minister of Labour, proudly talks about the great communication scheme he has to inform workers now of Employment Standards Act regulations. Oh, boy, does he have a scheme. He's got a 1-800 number and, yes, people can e-mail and, man, oh, man, you can do that in 19 languages. Isn't that great? It's beautiful. It's just so great. It's just so novel. Workers now will just have all of the tools in the toolbox to be able to go to the computer and just e-mail to find out. Isn't that novel? Isn't he creative? This is the best thing that could have ever happened to the workers—better than anything the Tories could have devised, I'm telling you.

Oh, yes, what if some of those workers don't have a computer? That's OK; maybe they can get their children to do it from school, presumably, because they might have computers in school. If they don't have a computer, or even if they do and they don't have the literacy skills, don't worry: You can dial the 1-800 number. Boy, don't we have experience with 1-800 numbers under the Tories? They had so many 1-800 numbers on so many issues. Speaker, you know—you probably even tried it yourself—you couldn't get through most of the time. You expect some worker with few skills, who can't use the computer or doesn't have a computer to e-mail—you want him or her to wait on that 1-800 number, assuming, possibly, maybe, they can get through. Yes, don't you worry: If you wait and get an answer from the other side,

you can get it in 19 languages. You're going to be really lucky, man, oh, man. This is one of the most innovative things I have yet to see from a minister and this Liberal government. They are so proud of the bill—so historical.

In fact, Bill 63 keeps much of the Tory government's erosion of Ontario's hours-of-work rules. For example, it fails to revoke the employer's ability to establish regular maximum work days, up to 13 hours a day. It does not revoke the ability, David, of an employer to force you to work beyond 13 hours. Your Minister Bentley, the Minister of Labour, didn't revoke that law, David. Check it out. Read the bill.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Why not?

Mr Marchese: Why wouldn't he do that, David Levac, I ask myself? You are the party that cares about workers, right? You guys have a big, big heart. You guys are so close to the working man and woman. You understand their plight. You understand it so well that you want them to be able to work beyond 13 hours a day, which is what the previous government had in its bills, because you think it's so good for workers to work as much as they can till they drop. So much do you care for the worker that you didn't want to revoke an employer's ability to force you to work beyond 13 hours. Boy, oh, boy, how close you are to the working man and woman.

I just want ordinary citizens out there to know that Minister Bentley, the Minister of Labour, loves you so much. He loves you to death, because he's going to work you till you drop. That's why he didn't want to revoke the section of the law introduced by the previous government that would allow employers to obligate workers to work beyond 13 hours. God bless you, Bentley, Minister of Labour, for looking out for the little guy. You are my kind of man; yes, siree. I am so proud to be able to say that out loud. I am so proud to tell the citizens of Ontario how good you are to the working man and woman.

Then, interestingly enough, he was talking about enforcement and he dug back into the past about the NDP. He's a lawyer. He knows how to do that. He talked about how we didn't do much about enforcement in 1991. But don't you worry, Minister Bentley will provide enforcement, if needed and when necessary—I think those are his words—and so you can depend on him not to have regular enforcement of the Employment Standards Act; you can rely on him to have enforcement, when and if needed. Isn't that beautiful? You can rely on Minister Bentley to have the enforcement there to do the work that needs to be done.

Hon Mr Bentley: Why didn't you do that, Rosario?

Mr Marchese: Yes, let me talk some more, Monsieur Bentley, about your bill and your protection of the non-union man and woman, because non-unionized workers are vulnerable in the workplace without adequate enforcement. The employer has the power to unilaterally deprive an employee of his or her livelihood. Mr Bentley said that he would dedicate resources to investigate alleged violations and that he will prosecute employers where allegations are found. Indeed, he promised to con-

duct 2,000 proactive inspections of workplaces, focusing on high-risk employers.

Mr Levac: Is that bad?

Mr Marchese: No. Yet as good as it sounds—because everything that Liberals sometimes do sounds good on the outside until you peel the onion and you realize how smelly it can be underneath that first peel, right?

All we can expect of this government and the Ministry of Labour are cuts. You would know, Speaker—let me explain it to you, Monsieur Bentley—you would know that other than health and education, which are your oh-so-protected ministries, every other ministry, including Jim's ministry, the Ministry of Tourism, is going to have to sustain cuts. It's going to be anywhere from 0% to 12%. We know that because the Minister of Finance told us as much.

You don't have enough money, so you have to modernize, and modernize in Liberal lingo means you have to cut. Who is going to have to sustain those cuts? The Minister of Tourism, my buddy for a long time now, at least 15 years, and Minister Bentley is going to have to suffer some of those cuts, because he's got to or that would make labour more important than tourism, let us say, or Comsoc or consumer relations—because he's here—or anything else for that matter, right?

So, Minister Bentley, don't look at me in such consternation. You've got to make those modernization cuts. They're called Liberal cuts, and that means we're not going to have any more money for enforcement; we're going to have less money for enforcement. That's why he couched it so liberally when he said—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Liberally?

Mr Marchese: —so liberally when he said, “We, unlike the NDP, will have enforcement, when needed,” meaning he's not going to send out the 2,000 or however many inspectors we need to do the 2,000 inspections where there are serious violations. Expect that, good citizens, and if you happen to be watching and you're a worker, Mr Bentley is no friend of yours, and this Liberal government is no friend of yours. I ask you to ask for the Hansard of the hearings that were conducted on this bill. We will get as many of those Hansards as you want of all the deputants who came in front of that committee because we have found that Mr Bentley, the Minister of Labour, has no friends when it comes to—

Mr Levac: Oh, no friends?

Mr Marchese: No friends. I tell you straight, he has no friends from those who came to depute against Bill 63. If there were friends, we didn't see them and they wouldn't identify themselves as such. They were hostile. They are inimical to Mr Bentley, the Minister of Labour, and his Bill 63. He has got no buddies. So I look forward again to the other Liberal speakers, who I know are anxious to stand up and defend this oh, yes, so modern, so historic bill that helps the working man and woman.

1640

Unlike the previous permit system, which set a limit of 100 hours per year per employee of excessive overtime,

there is no maximum on excessive hours of work per week or per year in Bill 63, no maximum whatsoever.

Ms Churley: Save me some time.

Mr Marchese: Of course, I will.

How does Minister Bentley justify the fact that there is no maximum on excessive hours of work per week or per year in Bill 63?

Now, some of the members to my left or across from me probably think, “What's he talking about?” because they don't know. They haven't read the bill. I don't blame them. How could you read all these bills that come in front of your attention? All you can do is trust Bentley, the Minister of Labour, to do the right thing. That's all you can do. So when I say these things, some of them possibly could be puzzled by my remarks, and I suspect many of them are probably saying in their own minds, “My God, if he's right, it could be a problem.” Please, members to my left, Liberal ones, check it out. Read the bill.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): We did.

Mr Marchese: My friend over there on the left always has these smart remarks: “We did, we did.”

Mr Racco: Now, that's not nice.

Mr Marchese: Yes, I know. It is true. Mr Ramal from London-Fanshawe: “We did, we did.” OK. So if he read the bill, I expect him to stand up soon to correct me.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): He's been silenced.

Mr Marchese: No no, he's not shy. I hope some of you just don't read your prepared speech, because let me explain: Prepared speeches are designed not to allow you to get out of the box, not to allow you to get out to freely say what you want, to allow you only to say what Minister Bentley and his staff have written for you. That's what it's about. I know that. We have been there. We've seen it. Unlike some of you, there are times when members have to stand up and say what they feel, rather than getting a proscribed or prescribed little letter that says, “Here's what it says, and you read it passionately,” if you can read passionately. You know what I'm saying? Stand up, member from London-Fanshawe. Correct me. I want to be corrected.

Unlike the previous permit system, which set a limit of 100 hours—even Tories set a limit of 100 hours per year per employee on excessive overtime—this bill does not. How could you, Monsieur Bentley, Minister of Labour, allow that? You who are so friendly to the working man and woman, you who understand them so well, who got elected by the support of so many working men and women, how could you do that to them? How could you stand up there so cozy in your remarks as if somehow the workers would just receive you with such pleasure and joy the next time they see you?

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): They have.

Mr Marchese: Yes they have. The Liberal rump is still rumping on this side.

Anyway, I'm leaving time for my colleague from Toronto-Danforth, because she has some things to say. I am convinced she will be as vigorous in her remarks in opposition to Bill 63 as I have been. I am convinced the

workers out there will know what this government is all about, what Liberals are all about and what they stand for.

I've got to tell you, citizens of this province watching this program, Liberals are not friends of yours if you are a working man or woman. Bill 63 doesn't help you. In fact, it makes your life much more difficult. And for that reason, we oppose it.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It certainly is a pleasure to follow the member from Trinity-Spadina. As usual, he's entertaining and, as usual, a little short on facts. I'd like to bring forward some of the facts.

I'd like you to think back to 1990. The Bob Rae government gets elected. Remember? The socialist ship was coming in. Remember, the working man was going to go off into that bright sunlight? Remember the sunset?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the member that the debate goes through the Chair.

Mr Flynn: I'm sorry. It's so tempting, Mr Speaker.

Let me tell you about the system that was in place during those years and the system that remained in place during the years that the New Democrats, that party that always supports the working people, had a chance to do something. What did they do? They had a blue permit; they had a green permit; they had a gold permit. Of course, you know what all of those permits did.

Let me tell you what else they did. Prior—

Mr Marchese: Aren't you going to explain the system to the folks? Explain it to the folks.

Mr Flynn: I can explain it very easily, but I think I'd like to go on to this: During the NDP period, was there a requirement that a worker had to have a daily rest? Was the NDP so onside with the working class that they said, "We think you should have a daily rest"? No, you weren't. And who brought in the daily rest? The Conservative Party brought in at least 11 consecutive hours free from work each day. Apparently, under the NDP, you could work 24 hours a day: the party of the working class. Way to go.

Was there a requirement that between shifts, maybe you have to have a break? Would a worker have to have a break between shifts under the NDP? No. It was the Conservatives who changed that, not that party of the working class, the NDP. It was that socialist party the Progressive Conservatives of Ontario.

Now, even something as basic as food: There's a 30-minute eating period free from work in every five consecutive hours of work. The Conservatives said, "You can change that if you like." Under the New Democratic Party that we've just heard from so passionately, which supports workers' rights in this province, was there a weekly rest requirement? I'm afraid not. It was the Tories, those Conservatives, friends of the working class, who decided, "Do you know what? The New Democrats are treating you badly. We're going to treat you better. We're going to give you at least 24 hours of rest every workweek or 48 consecutive hours in every period of two consecutive weeks."

Very simply put, under the present legislation in Ontario, an employer can compel you as an employee to work up to 60 hours a week, with your tacit agreement. During the NDP years, what sort of agreement did you have to have? Did you have to have something in writing? An oral agreement: "I have an oral agreement with my employees, and they said that they wanted to do it." Airtight stuff. I don't think we can beat that.

Hon Mr Bentley: Oh, that's strong.

Mr Flynn: Strong stuff.

I think we need to look at the economy, at the environment we're trying to create in this province. This month, we had the lowest unemployment rate in Ontario in three years. We've created over 80,000 jobs since we took office. We've got funds: \$300 million for R&D; \$500 million for the auto investment strategy fund. In my home community of Oakville, the Ford plant—the one with which the Tories would not partake in a tri-party agreement—landed over \$1 billion of investment in this province, over 4,000 jobs from a tri-party agreement that the Conservatives simply ignored. This government took office and, with the insistence and the help of organized labour in the offices of the Canadian Auto Workers, landed that plant for the people of Ontario, for the people of my community of Oakville. That's one of only six plants in the world today that operates on a flex manufacturing system. It took teamwork, it took the right environment, it took an environment that allowed all parties to work together to allow that plant to be built.

1650

Mr Levac: A little bit of Kevin Flynn.

Mr Flynn: A little bit of Kevin Flynn perhaps, but not a lot. I think it was the environment we created with this government.

I'd like to talk about some of the information that's being brought forward on what was said at the committee hearings. I was present at the meetings. I heard groups come forward. Some told us we were going too far with this legislation, that it was too onerous, that it was going to be hard to comply with. Primarily, I'd say those views came from the business community. Others came forward from organized labour and said, "This bill doesn't go far enough. We'd like it to go further."

Mr Marchese: Where does it go?

Mr Flynn: I'll tell you where this bill goes right now: It goes back to approximately the type of legislation that existed under the New Democratic Party. It's a bill that brings back the ability of an employee to balance work and family life, and employers have the flexibility they need to compete in a world economy. What you had under the NDP was not bad labour legislation, in an economy that was crumbling and a province that was almost bankrupt. I think you have to have an environment that accounts for both of those. The proposed legislation provides real protection for vulnerable workers, while being administratively simple for those who are employers in our province.

New legislation is going to be supported by an enhanced enforcement initiative. Simply put, you can have

the strongest legislation, but if you're not enforcing it, it doesn't matter. This is the type of legislation that allows people in this province to balance their work lives. It gives them a choice in how long they would like to work. It gives them rights to work with their employers. I think what we have is legislation that is balanced, that goes right down the middle. It's the sort of legislation that's going to add to the environment we've already begun to create in this province, where business, labour and government are working together.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to add a few comments today to the debate on Bill 63. I think it's really rather interesting to look at the context in which we find ourselves debating this particular bill. In the election, there were two promises made by this government. One was that they would take away the 60-hour workweek and the second was the question of reducing bureaucratic red tape on small business. It's in that context that we have to look at the bill in the few minutes we have remaining.

The first thing that becomes very obvious is the fact that this becomes an exercise of two more broken promises. For one thing, if you look at the bill, you see that while they may have campaigned on the notion of eliminating the 60-hour workweek, that it would be gone, in fact it's not gone. Instead, the other promise that was broken by this bill is the addition of a further bureaucratic burden. I think it's really important to understand that's the context of the bill we're looking at here today. So the effect of this bill means that it is still possible for agreements between workers and employers to have a 60-hour workweek.

There are a couple of things about the bill that I think are worth noting. One of them is section 1, which amends section 2 of the act and requires a poster containing information about this bill to be placed in a prominent place in the workplace. I think all of us would agree that, in this day and age, that kind of thing should be there for every piece of legislation. I know that in many cases you see information posted for people in the workplace, whether it's health and safety issues or various other kinds of things.

The other part of the bill that I think is most important is section 17.4, which sets out the criteria that will allow for a 60-hour workweek, even if approval from the ministry is not received within a 30-day period after application. What we're seeing here is that it's still there. Anyone who thinks it has gone is certainly misunderstanding the actual bill. It means that workers and employers are still looking at averaging over a four-week period.

I think this speaks to the initiative of the previous government in the bill that was passed in 2000, which recognized the need for the ability to average and the flexibility that's required in the workplace. Over the past few years, we have seen people agreeing to 12-hour days and various other combinations, and the intent of the original piece of legislation was simply to allow that in a timely way. What we're seeing here today is that it is still

possible to have a 60-hour workweek, but it is now incumbent on the employer to deal with red tape and bureaucracy.

I think the rationale this government gives for that is really quite superficial, because what we're talking about when we talk about labour relations, and obviously their link to the economy, is the question of job creation. As soon as you begin to create barriers to job creation, you begin to have an impact on quality of life. Clearly, the ability to have a job, the opportunity to have a job, is the key to your own personal quality of life, the quality of life of your family and also to quality of life within the province as a whole, because it is only through job creation and people having jobs that you can have any kind of government spending.

We are constantly reminded of the kinds of limitations on government spending. Anything that takes away from Ontario's ability to create jobs and have the kind of environment that allows for the increase of jobs, as opposed to the damage that's done by reducing job creation, cuts at the very heart of the keys to the kind of quality of life we think is essential.

For instance, health care spending: I know in my riding the question of expansion to include cancer care at Southlake, the hospital in Newmarket, is a critical piece of the provision of health care in a growing area of York region and south Simcoe county. I know there are questions with regard to money available for infrastructure—and here we look at members of my riding who face a commute of significance—growing problems in terms of the need for infrastructure money. These are all critical issues that go back directly to the link to job creation. So it's very important for any government to consider what it is they are doing that interferes with that process.

I think that if you look at Bill 63, it becomes clear that partnered with increases in taxes, we're looking at increases in red tape. Those eat at the ability to be competitive and to have jobs in this province, and eat at the very core of the ability to provide quality of life. So in looking at this bill, we're looking at two broken promises.

1700

Ms Churley: This bill, as has been pointed out by my colleagues earlier, is wholly inadequate. It breaks a Liberal promise—I heard some of the Conservatives say it breaks two—and it cannot be supported by this caucus. I know the Liberals have a majority and everybody will vote for it, and I guess we can assume it's going to pass.

It's funny, it reminds me that recently I was doing the Michael Coren show with a colleague from the Conservative Party and a colleague from the Liberal Party, and we were discussing democratic renewal. One of my colleagues from the Liberal Party quite sincerely said—we were talking about, in his view, some of the games that were being played in the Legislature and stuff. He said, "Well, why do we need all this debate anyway? We have a majority, and at the end of the day it's going to pass," which demonstrated to me the lack of—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I like this particular person, actually. I can't say that for all the Liberals in the place.

Mr Baird: Who?

Ms Churley: David Zimmer. He's a nice guy. He said this publicly on TV, so I'm not telling tales out of school here. It wasn't a private conversation. I think he genuinely had that sense of, why do we bother having these long debates when, at the end of the day, the Liberal majority is going to vote in a block and it's going to pass?

I've got to say that this is one of those examples where some people might think, "Well, we're at third reading. The Tories and New Democrats oppose it"—for different reasons, I might add—"and we have talked about this debate over the first two readings. It has gone to committee," where I understand nobody came to support the government on this. Nobody liked what was before them, but at the end of the day the changes weren't made, and we're here. Yes, we're in third reading and we've divided the time. Some may say, "Why bother?" Of course, this is what democracy is all about. There's always the slim chance, the slim hope, that minds can be changed, but on top of that, it is an opportunity to get on the record what various individual members from whatever party feel about a bill.

That's what this is all about, and that's why I'm glad I have this opportunity, because I haven't had an opportunity to speak to it. I don't have a lot of time, nor do I need a whole lot of time, but I do want to get on the record why I think this bill is really flawed. It's because the government has failed to provide the changes that would do what they said they were going to do, and that was to enable workers to enforce their rights while at work. It fails to take a comprehensive approach to responsibly addressing hours of work, overtime and enforcement.

Furthermore, which is even more shocking, but less shocking these days as we see more and more of this, Bill 63 actually keeps much of the Tory government's erosion of Ontario's hours-of-work rules. For example, incredibly, after the promises made, it fails to revoke an employer's ability to establish regular maximum work-days up to 13 hours a day. Our position, and we say it again today, is that this bill before us does not achieve that. Ontario needs a 40-hour week now. We are out of step with many other jurisdictions across the country. The workweek is 40 hours in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland—Newfoundland and Labrador, I should say, which is the official name—where I hail from, Nunavut, Yukon and Northwest Territories, and under federal jurisdiction. This was an opportunity for the government to get it right. I don't know why—whether it was listening too much to the employers—but they did not go far enough, and we're still not in step with the rest of those provinces.

There was no attempt whatsoever to eliminate overtime averaging in this bill. In our view, and in the view of many of the workers, overtime averaging is a big gift to

the employers. Averaging, as you know, Mr Speaker—you were sitting on this side of the House with us then—was brought in by the Tories under the ESA, 2000. It allows overtime to be averaged over up to four weeks, rather than being paid after 44 hours in one week. We're very concerned because non-unionized workers are vulnerable in the workplace without adequate enforcement. The employer does have the power—we've all seen it happen; we're not making this stuff up—to unilaterally deprive an employee of his or her livelihood.

I know the labour minister said he was going to dedicate resources to investigate alleged violations and prosecute employers. Indeed, he promised to conduct 2,000 proactive inspections of workplaces, focusing on high-risk employers, yet there is still no new money for the Ministry of Labour investigations. This really puts into question the McGuinty government's real commitment to this initiative.

Those are, in just a few minutes, my major concerns with this bill. There are others. Should I choose to go on now, I could only go on for 10 more minutes, but if I had the time, I could go on for another hour about some of my concerns and the New Democratic Party's concerns about this bill. However, I'm going to stop now because I've had the opportunity to put my major concerns about this bill on the record.

I'm saddened that we're going to go ahead. I know we're going to delay the vote, that's not going to happen today, but the debate is now ending without amendments made to fix the very serious concerns and very serious problems with this bill—this, another broken-promise bill before us today—for the workers of Ontario. With that, Mr Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity.

Mr O'Toole: It's no surprise that most of the members on this side would use the opportunity to speak on Bill 63. It is because, as the member from York North just said, it's two for the price of one; two broken promises for the price of one. I want to refer specifically to my prepared notes that I have spent some time preparing on Bill 63. I can only say that most of what you'll hear specifically in comments on the bill are that this bill purports to do something it doesn't do.

I'm waiting for Jim Flaherty, the member from Whitby-Ajax, because when he was Minister of Labour he did serious consultations with labour leaders as well as business leaders, trying to get the system to be more functioning and more responsive. One of the things I am quite familiar with, having worked in the industry sector for some 30-plus years—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: I'm concerned that Mr Baird, our health critic, has a health problem.

We knew in our industry that the permit system simply did not work. It was a formality, technically, for routine overtime and those kinds of things. We need to make sure this minister knows that this bill does not do what he says it does. It's one more time that the people of Ontario are going to be somewhat disappointed.

I have to reserve some time, although very limited, for the member from Whitby-Ajax. As a former Minister of

Labour and a former Minister of Finance, he of all people knows. I'm looking for an indication that the former Deputy Premier and former Minister of Labour is prepared to pick up the debate. I don't want this not to be responded to.

Thank you very much for the limited opportunity to speak to this very, very defining time in labour history.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I will be short, as is my wont. The whip on the other side is concerned.

Mr Levac: I don't want any comments.

Mr Flaherty: This is remarkably insignificant legislation. It ranks with sushi and concerns about wine and dogs and other things. It is on that level.

The Minister of Labour should be embarrassed to bring a bill like this in front of the Legislature, as if they had nothing better to do at the Ministry of Labour than create paperwork for employers—small business employers, medium-sized businesses and larger businesses—in the province of Ontario. The whole purpose of getting rid of this paperwork was to make it easier for businesses to do business and employ people.

The rule is now that an employer and an employee agree if the employee is going to work over 48 hours in a given week. It works fine. I asked the members of this House how many have had complaints about the current system. I've heard none. There are none. This is a make-believe, make-work project for the Ministry of Labour to force employers to generate a whole bunch of permit-type paper for no beneficial purpose, not for the public good in Ontario. In fact, it's contrary to the public good because it will cost money. It will be wasteful for employers and wasteful for the public servants who are going to waste their time administering this paper-driven system in the province.

The other thing that's come out of the Ministry of Labour—again, the Minister of Labour and in fact anyone who believes in democracy should be embarrassed by the bill that's before the House to take away the right to a secret vote in certifications. Anybody who respects democracy knows that that is an affront to democratic principles brought before this Legislature.

So far, we see from the Ministry of Labour and the Minister of Labour one insignificant piece of legislation—this bill. The other one is a bill taking away democratic rights from workers in Ontario. It's shameful.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bentley has moved third reading of Bill 63.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the motion on third reading of Bill 63 be deferred until Thursday, December 9, 2004."

Hon Mr Bentley: Can I move adjournment of the House?

The Deputy Speaker: You can if you like.

Hon Mr Bentley: That's what I would like to do, move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Bentley has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock Thursday, December 9.

The House adjourned at 1714.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

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(Hansard)**

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Jeudi 9 décembre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 décembre 2004

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

WATER SUPPLY

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should identify and protect moraines, watersheds and headwater areas, beyond the greenbelt study area initially identified by the province, in which urban development would have a significant negative impact on groundwater supplies.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mrs Sandals: First of all, perhaps I should start by making it clear what we're not discussing. What we're not discussing this morning is the area that will lie within the proposed greenbelt.

What we are discussing is the area that lies outside the greenbelt, which in fact is most of the land mass of Ontario. This motion, if passed, will highlight the need to address groundwater protection as we plan for growth in Ontario over the next 30 years.

If we cast our mind back to the Walkerton inquiry, recommendation number 1 said, "Drinking water sources should be protected by developing watershed-based source protection plans" for all watersheds.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about the watershed that I live in, which is the Grand River watershed. The Grand River rises up in the northeast end of Wellington county and north Dufferin, and winds through Dufferin county and over through Fergus and Elora and Wellington, over through into Waterloo region, through Kitchener-Waterloo, down through Cambridge, through Brantford and comes out in the Dunnville area, down on Lake Erie. But it has a whole lot of tributaries, so in my part of the world we have the Speed River and the Eramosa River, which rise in east Wellington and flow in at Cambridge. We have the Conestoga river, which rises in north Wellington and flows down through Waterloo region and comes into the Grand River. Over in Perth county, we have the Nith River rising and flowing through the New Hamburg area and on down.

All in all, if we think in terms of the way we measure things in this House, the Grand River watershed covers

nine ridings—or, to put it in more normal calculations, 6,800 square kilometres are in the Grand River watershed. The current population is over 800,000, soon 900,000 people, and the population in the Grand River watershed is expected to grow by at least 37%, about 300,000 people, over the next 20 years alone. Some 80% of the residents, or over 600,000 people, get their drinking water from wells—in other words, groundwater—both municipal and private.

There are 800 active water-taking permits in the Grand River watershed, but municipalities are the major holders of those water permits. In fact, groundwater accounts for 69% of municipal drinking water in this watershed, which is somewhat unusual for a watershed. That's why dealing with groundwater source protection is so very, very important.

I'd like to read you a bit from the Grand River Conservation Authority's watershed report for 2004. This is talking about the Grand River watershed, obviously.

"The central part of the watershed is covered with moraines—hills made up of loose soils with high levels of sand and gravel.

"When snow melts or rain falls, the water soaks into the ground, which feeds or 'recharges' the aquifers below ground.

"Some of the water feeds shallow aquifers and eventually feeds coldwater springs or seeps directly into rivers and streams, providing them with a source of cold, clear water, even in summertime.

"The rest of the water makes its way into deeper aquifers, where it feeds the municipal wells serving Guelph, Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and many other communities.

"In fact"—what's interesting—"about 80% of the groundwater recharge takes place in just 30% of the land area.... Thus, it is important that the function of these moraines and sand plains be preserved in the future if the groundwater and surface water systems are to be protected."

But what's interesting is that, "Each of the major cities of the watershed is growing into a major recharge area."

To lay this out a little bit more specifically, because you can't see the maps in their reports, there in fact is one moraine which runs from south of Rockwood, south of Guelph, south of Cambridge, north of Brantford, over into the Paris area. Another moraine runs down the west side of Kitchener-Waterloo. So all of the major cities in the area are located very close to these critical moraines. So if I can go on to quote the GRCA:

"How do we deal with this, with all of the pavement and drainage associated with urban development?"

"We can either learn how to build our communities so that water continues to enter the ground and that it goes in as clean as it can be, or we can develop our cities in another direction.

"The water resources of the Grand River watershed have made this region one of the richest, most dynamic parts of Canada. If that is to continue, they will have to be used wisely."

1010

In fact, in order to address this, the Grand River Conservation Authority, together with the Long Point, Catfish Creek and Kettle Creek conservation authorities, has already appointed a source water protection project manager, who will lead a team of water quality, geology and groundwater experts to carry out research. What they will be looking at are studies on water use, the location and size of aquifers, stream flows, land use patterns, and susceptibility of water sources to pollution. I'm pleased to confirm that this position will be funded by our Ministry of the Environment, after an announcement that Minister Dombrowsky made just a few weeks ago.

What is critical here is that Ontario will continue to grow. The greater Golden Horseshoe area will continue to grow. The cities in the Grand River watershed will continue to grow. We understand that we live in a high-growth area, and because of that, our government has tabled Places to Grow legislation. We will be putting in place 30-year plans dealing with economic expansion, infrastructure requirements where growth centres are going to be, and environmentally sensitive areas which require protection.

This motion ensures that as we plan for growth in the Grand River watershed and in other places like this all over Ontario—because this motion is not just about the Grand River Conservation Authority. I've talked about the Grand River because that's the area that I know best, but there are places all over Ontario outside the greenbelt where groundwater is a critical resource. We need to ensure not that we stop growth but that, as we plan for growth, one of the critical components of that planning is looking at the areas which are crucial for groundwater regeneration, because if we don't continue to protect groundwater recharge areas, we won't have groundwater, and if we don't have groundwater, there will be hundreds of thousands of people who will have their water supply endangered. So it is critical that we actually deal with this issue and make this an important part of municipal planning, and that as we look at this—in fact, we don't have all the information we need. Even in my watershed, which is one of the leaders in doing research, we don't have all the critical information. We need to do more study so that we understand the mechanics of groundwater recharge.

We need to understand how dense development can be on a moraine. Do we have rules that are different for development on a moraine than they might be on other land? What is it that we need to do to ensure that our

children and our children's children continue to enjoy the water resources that make Canada, and particularly Ontario, special?

One of Ontario's greatest resources has always been its access to clean drinking water. As we saw with the Walkerton incident, when we don't think about that in planning for the future, we endanger the health of our citizens. I ask for the support of all members so that we can protect our water supplies for our children.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

With respect to ballot item number 45, I listened to the presentation from the member opposite making the motion to identify and protect moraines, watersheds and headwater areas beyond the greenbelt study area with respect to groundwater supplies. The member indicated that this would cover most of the land mass of Ontario outside of the greenbelt.

I do wish to stress the importance of our Great Lakes. Whether that's an oversight, I think it's very important that any discussion of water—groundwater or watersheds or headwaters—should also make mention of and accommodate the health of the Great Lakes in the province of Ontario.

Our position was outlined very recently, and I'll just quote from the PC platform:

"A healthy environment is one of the greatest legacies we can leave to future generations of Ontarians. But investments in preserving our natural environment are not only for the future, they are part of the quality of life for Ontarians today. All of us need and deserve to have confidence in the safety of our water."

Now, with respect to this motion, we clearly support the protection of drinking water. However, the wide-ranging nature of a motion like this does raise a number of questions. I don't know whether these questions will be answered in the course of the debate this morning.

One concern: I've certainly attended a number of meetings, and one large meeting, with respect to the greenbelt, and the issue was raised concerning to what extent a direction like this would lead to alienation of landowners or farmers, landowners concerned about government intrusion, if you will, or any potential diminishing of their land. When I say that, of course, and farm organizations will mention this as well, the issue of compensation is raised.

A question arises with this motion and with the broader source water protection legislation that we're promised will be introduced by the end of this year: What is the relationship of this motion to the plethora of other pieces of legislation that have been introduced by this government, and by the previous government, with respect to water? With respect to the draft source water protection legislation, how does this motion relate to that? And I guess the question is, too, why would this motion be introduced today? Do we expect the government legislation today or later next week?

I don't know whether I heard any mention of the Justice O'Connor report. Of course, much of this

initiative over the last four years or so has come from Walkerton and Justice O'Connor. As a government, we committed to implementing all 121 recommendations of the O'Connor report on Walkerton and made significant progress. Over 60%, or 78 of the 121 recommendations, were either put into effect or being implemented through major new legislation. I'd make mention of one: the Safe Drinking Water Act for Ontario. That act received royal assent back on December 13, 2002, and provided the legislative authority to implement 50 of the 93 recommendations of O'Connor's part II report. So I do wish to reiterate that we have a very strong commitment to the environment. We committed to implement every single recommendation of the Walkerton inquiry report.

I do raise the issue that it's very important for government to concern itself with protecting municipal drinking water. How far do you take that? Can you protect and study all water everywhere in the province, including the Great Lakes?

The member made mention of the Grand River watershed. It has been pointed out in this House a number of times that this present government is reviewing a major expansion of a landfill, the Edwards dump, outside of Cayuga. This is a landfill on a wetland slough forest only two miles from the Grand River.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I'm delighted to speak in support of this resolution. On two occasions in this House, I proposed resolutions regarding the preservation of agricultural and environmentally sensitive land, and they received overwhelming support.

1020

That is the pattern that happens so very often. People running for municipal office in our area, for instance, inevitably run to save the farmland. They're going to preserve agricultural land. Provincial governments run and they're going to try to preserve environmentally sensitive and agricultural land. But when it comes down to the actual passing of a bill or bringing forward legislation at the local level, for instance, when there are decisions to be made which affect land use, you find that the development industry has a lot of influence.

I was reading in the newspaper the other day some of the municipal people saying, "At the local level we really feel the pressure. The developers or the person proposing the specific development live next door. They belong to our service club; they belong to a church or a synagogue or a mosque; or they just happen to be associates of people." So the pressure on local politicians is always great.

There are areas outside of the present greenbelt which are deserving of the preservation legislation that we can see forthcoming from this Legislature in the future. That's why I want to commend the member. This isn't the only area—the greenbelt—that requires this kind of protection. I've watched over the years different governments in power of different political stripes struggle to try to preserve agricultural land. They've not been successful in doing so, necessarily. Each one has to a certain

extent, but I think the legislation we have goes a long way to meet that. Second, I also think it's important to extend it to other areas of the province. I commend the member for doing so.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I am pleased today to rise to join the debate concerning the motion brought forward by the member from Guelph-Wellington. I think she and I are very much in agreement about some of the important principles of protecting our local environments. In the riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, there are several different watersheds and accompanying conservation authorities. The Kawartha Lakes, Lake Simcoe and Otonabee watersheds are just some of the local watersheds responsible for meeting the need for clean water throughout my riding.

We depend on water in the Kawarthas for more than just drinking. Much of our economy, as the Minister of Tourism and Recreation knows, is tourism-based and is driven by water-dependent activities such as boating, fishing and swimming. Our cottaging opportunities and recreational activities all depend on good water quality. Even the value of our land is certainly tied to the water.

I don't know how many of you are aware of this, but even the native Indian word "Kawartha" translates into "shining" or "sparkling water." Champlain even came up to the Kawarthas on one of his initial visits over to this side of the continent.

Everyone who lives in or does business in the Kawarthas is affected by and has a stake in water quality, and it's certainly a quality-of-life issue for us.

I'm sure some of you may recall the many petitions that my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka and I have brought forward to the House dealing with closure of the Frost Centre. We're very passionate about this because it's embodied the very best of our part of the province. The Frost Centre was all about conservation and stewardship, the very things we're talking about here today.

The motion we are debating reads, "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should identify and protect moraines, watersheds and headwater areas, beyond the greenbelt study area initially identified by the province, in which urban development would have a significant negative impact on groundwater supplies." The Frost Centre taught the people of Ontario, the children of Ontario, the stewardship programs, so that property owners would be able to do their part to protect the land that they and their families are living on.

For many people throughout my riding, conservation and stewardship are more than things to talk about. They are certainly a way of life, and I encourage anyone to visit the Frost campus of Sir Sandford Fleming College to see what they have done with their new building, how they are teaching conservation and how to live with it and how to promote energy efficiency in the province.

I know it will come as good news that the conservation areas in my riding and Sir Sandford Fleming are already moving on this path. In fact, I think Susanna Kelley said they're light-years ahead up in Haliburton-Victoria-Brock in their conservation. The Lake Simcoe

Region Conservation Authority, for example, which touches on parts of my riding, has a full range of GIS data available for the Lake Simcoe watershed, from standard infrastructure layers to natural resource layers, including recent Landsat satellite land use images. So the identification of watersheds and headwater areas is the easy part of the equation. The province may have to work with the existing conservation authorities—and I'm sure and hopeful that they will—to pull together the information they have been collecting. A lot of people have been working for quite some time to protect our natural resources, and the harder part is to protect them. That is where the government has to step forward.

I hope the government will recognize that throughout the province, landowners, especially those in my riding, have cared for the stewardship of the land long before it became a political cause and long before many of the people in this place ever heard of the word "stewardship." The roots of many families go back generations, and many of us learned from our parents and grandparents the importance of protecting the lands, both in and around our communities. I know my grandfather Scott was a conservation officer up in Haliburton county from just after the First World War until 1959.

I hope the government will work with local councils and work with local conservation authorities rather than just impose a solution on them, like they're doing with the greenbelt legislation. We're happy they have allowed those hearings to extend into January so that there's more time and to get more input, especially from the local areas. I mention this because Brock township, for instance, as I've said many times before, is included in the greenbelt boundaries, but just on the township line. So it seems to be a little bit of a heavy-handed solution on that, and I'm hoping they're going to be listening to the municipalities there about their concerns.

Today we're not talking about legislation—and I honestly don't know what concerns I would have until it came forward, other than some of them mentioned—but we're talking about a motion. That motion speaks to a very important point. I think we should all support it so that our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy the natural bounty of Ontario.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's a pleasure for me to stand and speak in support of this motion before the Legislature, and I'd like to begin by congratulating my colleague from Guelph-Wellington for bringing forward such an important motion. As a representative of the Grand River watershed, representing a community located near one of the richest groundwater sources in the province, I can only express my strong support for this.

What's behind this motion is the idea of growth, of balanced growth, of balanced planning. When I look at this motion before us, I say it's very straightforward.

When we look at a community like mine, Waterloo, ironically, both Minister Gerretsen and Minister Caplan said the region of Waterloo was one of the models they looked at in terms of the measures that have been brought

forward to this House in terms of planning and an approach to planning with the work that's been done locally. The irony is that it's outside of the proposed greenbelt. What my colleague from Guelph-Wellington is saying is that communities such as mine, communities such as hers, which rely on watershed, we need to take a look at; we need to bring the same sort of balanced approach to planning to these areas as is done in the greenbelt.

This does not mean that there is no development in these areas. This does not mean that moraines and other areas will forever be kept green and there will never be an opportunity to develop. What it means is that we're going to have smart development. We're going to recognize the fact that these areas provide water sources for many, many people and that as we develop these areas, we want to make sure that it's done in a way which does not put these water sources in jeopardy.

When you take a look at the whole area around the Grand River watershed, to look at some of the facts: The population in the Grand River watershed is expected to grow by 37% over the next 20 years, and in fact I've heard that that may be a low estimate; I've heard higher. The current population in the Grand River watershed is 800,000, covering 6,800 square kilometres. Some 80% of the residents get their drinking water from wells. Surface water enters the ground through loose or sandy soils to recharge groundwater and enter these wells.

I think we have an obligation as a province to make sure that the type of planning and the type of thoughtfulness that's going into the greenbelt legislation is extended to other areas, as I say, not to hinder development, but to make sure, as development happens, as growth happens in these areas, that it is done properly, that it is done right. That's why I'm pleased to stand and add my voice in support of this motion put forward by my colleague.

1030

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm going to speak on this bill—and I think some of my comments might be echoed by the member from Toronto-Danforth—because I was quite surprised that the greenbelt study area didn't apply to Simcoe county. There are some very strong reasons for that, which are outlined in this motion from the Liberal member from Guelph.

First of all is the impact that development is having on the area's water supply. Lake Simcoe, in terms of its condition, has been significantly impacted by phosphorus, and the lower water level on Lake Simcoe is quite astounding, yet a development is being proposed in Innisfil in my riding, in the Big Bay Point area, which would provide for 1,200 boat slips on Lake Simcoe, which is just unbelievable, and a development in excess of 3,000 units.

The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs are going to have to take a very serious look at what's being developed along the water. They shut down a project that was set up in Oro-Medonte

around the Fourth Line that was going to develop a seniors' residence and golf course, because it was too close to Lake Simcoe. Yet I think town council—I don't know what the result of the vote was last night—was looking at whether they were going to approve this particular project at the Big Bay Point area.

That's of serious concern for the situation of Lake Simcoe. I know the Lake Simcoe conservation authority does a good job, but they are not doing enough in terms of protecting Lake Simcoe if they're onside with that development. That's my personal view. We also have the Bear Creek watershed that feeds into my area and also into Simcoe-Grey and Essa, and that's significantly impacted.

What we're seeing is developers buying up large tracts of land in the areas outside the greenbelt—huge tracts of land—in anticipation of being able to develop it. I don't know how a municipality is going to be able to stand up to them when they're buying thousands of acres in that area.

I also have one area that is under siege in Bradford West Gwillimbury. They're proposing a purchase of prime farmland in Bond Head, Bradford West Gwillimbury, of 9,500 acres to develop a community of 37,000 people. The town of Bradford West Gwillimbury isn't even a third of that size. It doesn't have water capacity for that particular development. But that development is being proposed, which obviously will impact Lake Simcoe also, because Bradford West Gwillimbury feeds into the Lake Simcoe area at the south end.

So what you're seeing out there is, yeah, concern, and the member from Guelph is right in terms of making sure that we look, identify and protect, but why weren't they in the greenbelt area in the first place? It's complete nonsense that they weren't put in the greenbelt area and you've got a developer feeding frenzy going on—on all the farms; not only in my area I imagine it's happening out in Cambridge and other areas that weren't protected by the greenbelt.

Certainly, you need responsible development. The bottom line is, when you put up a green light to developers and say, "OK, you can't do anything in this greenbelt area, but you can come up into this area," really, what you're putting in place is, the government is going to have to be the protectorate of sound development. We already have so much development up in the area that the highways are clogged, up Highway 400. We've been trying to get GO Transit as one way to alleviate that, and that hasn't come to rise.

Since the government exempted these areas from the greenbelt, I think it's important that they make sure the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment are going to protect these water bodies. If they're not going to do that, then the greenbelt study is a disgrace, and it's going to be a record that this government is going to wear because of what they've done to the areas outside the greenbelt area.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I commend Mrs Sandals for bringing this resolution forward

today and certainly support the intent of the resolution—not surprisingly, because embodied in this resolution is the intent of some of the questions and issues that I've been raising in the Legislature and on committee about what's been left out of the government's greenbelt, the existing greenbelt, let alone the rest of the province.

It's ironic, I suppose, that I should say this, but even the Tories, before they were thrown out and the Liberals came into power, had something called Smart Growth, which was looking at the province as a whole, and which I was generally supportive of. Now, I admit it was just still on paper, just as the greenbelt legislation is right now, but it was moving forward and looking at the whole province in terms of smart growth. That's what the Liberal government is saying it's going to be doing in other pieces of legislation, but we haven't seen that yet, so we have no idea what the overall plan for preserving environmentally sensitive land and prime agriculture land across the province will look like.

Certainly, I attended a press conference a few days ago and raised the question as a result in the Legislature, based on municipal leaders for the greenbelt. They're making the same point. They say, "For nature to flourish, the boundaries of the greenbelt must be based on ecological principles, not political borders." There is some real concern that some of the borders just don't make sense within the existing greenbelt proposed by the government, and it looks more political in some spaces than based on science. That's what they're saying, and they're saying, "If it's not in the greenbelt, it's open season. Anything goes."

They then give a series of recommendations, which would involve including some of the lands that we're talking about here today. "Failure to adopt these measures, said Elgar, will mean that urban sprawl will continue to spread like a cancer in the GTA—with disastrous consequences for clean air, clean water, wildlife and our children." That is something that's put forward by me, and by some of the environmental groups who are very supportive of the concept of the greenbelt but who are making it very clear that all kinds of lands are being left out that, if not included, you will not have a greenbelt that will do what the stated intent is, and that is to stop urban sprawl. It will protect some environmentally sensitive land and agricultural land, no doubt, and that's a good thing, but it will not stop urban sprawl, which was one of the stated goals, which is why many of us are trying to actually improve it. I believe that is the intent of this resolution today as well, to include those lands that have been proposed by many, as well as across the province.

I want to talk about some of the other things that I would like to see included, because the intent of the greenbelt is to protect environmentally significant lands such as watersheds and headwaters. Sprawl produces polluted runoff entering waterways, and traffic congestion, we all know, that impairs our air quality and our water quality and destroys water areas. The initial greenbelt study area brought forth last December did not fully

capture significant water systems, but there were concerted efforts by many: environmental groups, NGOs, sustainable planning experts and citizens. The government did listen, and expanded somewhat based on those representations, but there are still significant hydrological areas omitted from the greenbelt, and I'm going to talk a little bit about those today.

One we don't hear about very much—but it really ties in very closely to the issue Mrs Sandals is talking about this morning—is the big pipe. You'll remember that the government on the Friday of a long weekend in the summer—I got the call when I was away—said that they were going to allow the building of a massive sewer pipe to move 740 million litres of sewage from communities within the greenbelt to a Pickering treatment facility. This massive sewer pipe requires the removal of 66 billion litres of water from the underground aquifer system of the Oak Ridges moraine in 2004. That's been given the go-ahead, and on top of that, this water is not being returned to the watershed that supplies the GTA's drinking water supply.

The Oak Ridges moraine's groundwater aquifer system feeds more than 35 rivers and stream headwaters, including the Don—which runs through my riding—the Rouge and the Humber, which flows into Lake Ontario. So the base flow of these rivers and Lake Ontario will be affected by this, yet it's been allowed to go ahead, which goes against the spirit of the intent of this motion before us today and what the greenbelt is supposed to be all about. You've got to ask, why is this exempt from the moratorium? One of the largest water-takings in Canadian history is being allowed to go ahead. Just so people understand what I'm talking about, if you're trying to visualize this, a deep underground swimming pool will be emptied out of the moraine every two minutes for the next two and a half years. That gives you a picture of what I'm talking about here.

1040

I'm going to refer to south Simcoe a little bit, although my colleague who is the representative of the area has described many of the problems with that area. It is an issue that I have raised in this Legislature. One of the main gaps and one of the main problems in the greenbelt, as proposed, is not only the leapfrog part. By now, we all know the problems, which is why I say that if the greenbelt goes ahead as it is, without adding this—south Simcoe and other pieces of land and sensitive environmental areas—you're not really going to be stopping urban sprawl. You're going to have a big zoning change, and that's good, to protect those lands, but you're not going to prevent urban sprawl; let's be very, very clear on that. That is why it is essential, if the government wants to be able to go out after passing the greenbelt and say, "We are stopping urban sprawl"—it won't be able to say that unless lands like south Simcoe are included.

This region, which at present is not included, contains rivers flowing north off the Oak Ridges moraine and Niagara Escarpment and into Lake Simcoe. It was not included in the initial study area, nor was it included in

the expanded belt. Its ongoing exclusion has set the stage for this leapfrog development I talked about. Developers will just leap over the belt and develop like crazy there, which they're already doing. It has been under significant pressure for some time now from urban sprawl, and because it was excluded, these pressures are even more heightened as developers, of course, move in and purchase more and more of that land because it's not included. Planning experts have thus described south Simcoe as the "wild west," because that's where all of the development is going to be taking place now. Proposed developments for south Simcoe include a proposal for the construction of an entire city in an area that's already under extreme pressure. This would be about 100,000 people, and that's massive by any scale. Furthermore, these developments are being proposed on lands not designated as urban residential in the county of Simcoe's official plan. This is crazy. Even Simcoe itself is saying that this should not be developed. Without action, south Simcoe will be a principal site where development leapfrogs, and we're already seeing that happen.

The Grand River, which has been talked about here today, absolutely should be included. I've been saying that for some time, and so have many others who are trying to expand the boundaries of the greenbelt. It's a very curious omission indeed. That's the watershed for Kitchener-Waterloo and Guelph. This has been talked about today, and I'm very happy to hear the members agree with me that this should be included in the greenbelt.

Then there's the issue of aggregates. I've brought that issue up here before and I've raised questions about it. I've said this during a question, and I never thought I'd see the day, but when it comes to aggregates, the Liberal policy on it within the greenbelt actually makes the previous Tory government look green. Even they didn't go so far. You know that.

Let me tell you what's going on. Contrary to protecting water and water sources, the greenbelt plan will permit new and expanded aggregate extraction throughout the greenbelt area. And then there's the new wording in the Liberal government's proposed provincial policy statement which significantly strengthens the aggregate industry's clutch on greenbelt lands and throughout Ontario. It didn't have to do that, but it actually went further than the previous Tories did. When it comes to aggregates, you're making a huge mistake. I think that if this is not fixed and repaired, you're going to go down in history on this one as being worse than the Tories, whom you so roundly criticized when you were over here in opposition. You just have to understand—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I'm not kidding. You need to listen to this. Aggregate activity has a very serious impact on water sources and supply. It often involves going under the water table, and it undermines groundwater integrity. You need to go back and take a second look at the new wording that's been put in, which actually makes it worse

than under the Tories. That's a fact; it's not just me saying that.

I want to point out to you, as I pointed out in question period here, that one of the worst examples is the slated expansion of the Milton quarry, which will put a giant, huge pit in the Niagara Escarpment, and that's the spine of the greenbelt. There's going to be this huge pit allowed there, and it will threaten to dry up streams and wetlands. I'm not happy about the deal that was made here. I'm going to be quite upfront about it.

I've been supportive of the government's greenbelt. With all my criticisms that it's not really going to stop urban sprawl, I've been supportive. Let's get this piece done while we can, because the pressures to actually reduce what's within the greenbelt are so great, instead of expanding it, which is what I want to do. I want to save more. But I'm really concerned, with it being out there, that a lot of pressure is being put on members from all parties to actually reduce what's already in the greenbelt. It's very alarming to me. I'm extremely disappointed that this deal was made, because I think if we were able to pass the greenbelt in a hurry, now—because consultations have been done. Let's get it done. There's still time for consultations. There are a lot of other pieces of legislation that the government is working on, and we could continue to work on expanding it. My great concern now is that the pressure is going to be so great that the lands that have already been designated are going to be reduced.

I also wanted to talk a bit about—I've only got a minute left—the fact that we need more ongoing funding for conservation authorities. They play a huge role. They're going to play a huge role in this and many other pieces of legislation. Minister Ramsay did announce \$12.5 million for watershed-based source protection in Ontario. That is directed to the conservation authorities and municipalities to hire expert staff. But you have to remember that funding to the conservation authorities was absolutely decimated in the Tory years. Many of them had to resort to selling off land to stay afloat, and much of that land did contain headwater areas. I think it's a shame that that happened. They need to be fully funded again so they can do all of the work they should be doing.

To fulfill the goals set out by this motion before us today, the planning process needs to consider headwater and groundwater sources from the start, not as an afterthought. However, the amended Planning Act did not see to this. In committee, I had proposed an amendment that would require official plans and planning applications to comply with source water protection. The source water protection legislation, though, can require that this act and the greenbelt act and acts related to resource extraction comply with it. The amendment I made to fix that was not accepted.

In closing, I support the resolution before us today and I urge the government, if they support this resolution, to go back to the drawing table and include not only the Grand River but all kinds of other pieces of land within the general GTA area and within Ontario that need to be protected now.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to add my support to the member from Guelph-Wellington. In my opinion, the private member's bill that's proposed here would certainly add to and complement the greenbelt strategy that has been submitted to the public at this point in time for their perusal on the greenbelt strategy.

I think, from my own experience in my own community of Oakville, planning at the local level has taken on a whole new profile with the public.

1050

If I can tell you something about that Oakville experience, we decided we were going to expand our community, and we went to the public and asked them just how that should take place, because we wanted their input. We expected a few people to come out. Well, people came out by the hundreds and they had some very important things to say to us. One citizen came forward and said, "Did you know there's a moraine in Oakville?" The planners in the town and the consultants we'd hired said, "There's no moraine in Oakville." Then a little bit of research was done and we found out we did have a moraine in Oakville.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): It was hiding.

Mr Flynn: That's right; it was hiding on us, I guess.

Then it became very interesting, the education that took place in the community around the issue of ground-water recharge and moraines. I'm not sure if many people in Oakville could spell "moraine" before we went through this planning exercise. Now it's something they know an awful lot about and something they respect. They had to go to books that went back as far as the 1940s to find out the ideal mapping of the Trafalgar moraine, and that was contained in a book by Putnam called *The Physiography of Southern Ontario*. All of a sudden, people around town were talking about the natural physiography of southern Ontario, talking about Oakville.

There's a whole new terminology in town now. People are starting to understand the values of watershed planning. People are starting to understand just what a moraine does, and it is the lifeblood of our communities. It's what keeps our natural environment thriving. When we hear about endangered species, when we hear of groups coming forward and asking us if we would do our part to protect endangered species, quite a lot of that endangerment has taken place as a result of the neglect of our moraines, of the neglect of our watershed when we've been planning. I think we can all look around our urban areas and see areas where planning has been—"not the best" I think would be kind in classifying it.

I think we can move ahead in a much better way. Other governments have attempted to do this in the past. I'm extremely proud of the greenbelt strategy that's been proposed to date. We'll have a lot more public input, public opinion on that in the weeks and months ahead, I'm sure. I think it's going to be a momentous step ahead in the province.

I thank that the proposal that's been put forward and the foresight that's been shown by the member for

Guelph-Wellington in proposing this private member's bill, as I said earlier, will only complement the proposal that's already been put forward by our own government.

The same pressures that impact on the major urban areas in southern Ontario, like the GTA, also impact on the Guelphs, the Brantfords and the Londons. There are a lot more watersheds in Ontario than simply the ones that surround the GTA.

So I'd like to add my congratulations to the member for Guelph-Wellington for bringing forward what I think is a tremendous initiative and lend my support and urge all members of the House to support this bill today.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I also rise today to support my friend the member for Guelph-Wellington and her resolution. I do that for a number of reasons. One, as a member from rural Ontario, from the great southwest, I wanted to add my congratulations about the need for us to be cognizant of groundwater. All of us understand surface water—we can see it—but groundwater is unique. As the Provincial Auditor reminded us, as Justice O'Connor reminded us in the Walkerton report, groundwater is vital to everyone in Ontario.

Speaking on behalf of the farmers, we know that you do not foul your own well. We also know that we don't foul our neighbour's well. Because we all tap into the same aquifer in a region, if there's contamination in one well, it will spread to other wells. So in rural Ontario we understand groundwater and how very important it is.

The challenge we face is to map something that cannot be seen, and this was key to Justice O'Connor. Speaking as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, I want to remind all members that we are committed to mapping the groundwater of this province. That's crucial. That bit of science is so very key to what it is we are trying to do.

We have two things that we have to concern ourselves with: The quality of the water itself, to make sure that this pristine, preglacial water that is contained in moraines and underground and that we tap into stays as pure as possible, does not become contaminated; also, the quantity of that water. That's why I know our government and my minister were so insistent when we formed the government to have a moratorium on the permit to take water. We weren't going to allow people to take water willy-nilly without paying for it, without any value to it. There has to be a balance on the need for us to take the water, but we can't be grabbing a resource without any control, without any sense of its importance. If water is free, then we devalue water. That is something we cannot afford to do.

I want to mention as well that we as a government, and my ministry in particular, unveiled draft source protection legislation. One of the key recommendations of Justice O'Connor was the need to protect source water, and that draft legislation went up. It was, as I mentioned, actually recommendation number one from the Walkerton inquiry. So in November, our government pledged \$12.5 million to help municipalities and conserv-

ation authorities develop watershed-based source protection plans. The provincial groundwater monitoring network will form the basis for these watershed-based source protection plans. The network already consists of 382 wells that monitor groundwater levels and quality right across Ontario. The network acts as an early warning system for changes in both water level and water quality. This is done on most parameters which are specified in the drinking water quality standards regulation.

That's why I want to rise in support of the member for Guelph-Wellington. Her resolution is congruent with what we are doing as a party and as a government. You cannot value something that you can't measure. You cannot value something as a society when it is considered to be free. Our government is very concerned about being able to map and measure groundwater, and no longer will it be considered free, because water is invaluable.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to first thank my colleagues for allowing me to have a few moments to speak in the House about this important issue. I have just a little bit of time to make a few points and hopefully I'll make them as thoroughly as possible.

Obviously, the member for Guelph-Wellington brings to us an important piece of a puzzle, and a piece of that puzzle is important for us to understand.

Let me make a couple of comments first on the generality of private members' time. This is the time for ideas. This is the time to bring out some of the wonderful things that are happening in our ridings, some of the things that affect us as a population and as a community. It's an opportunity to push forward, push the envelope and make sure that each and every one of us has a voice.

I have a relationship to the member over there, as I do with this member and that member and the people in the gallery: it's water, it's air, it's land. Those three things are important to us for our survival. The member is offering us an opportunity to debate something that is extremely important, not just because it's life-saving and life-giving, but because it's interconnected to all of us. We've got to get that right.

Do we all have the answers individually? No, we do not. For anyone to stand up and say they have the answer and here's how we're going to do it, they're wrong. When we put the ideas on the table, debate them, discuss them, look at the expertise and look at the people out there who give us the opportunity to get that equation right, then we're going to head on the right track, and that's where we're headed with this resolution. I thank the member for doing that.

There are a couple of groups of people I want to mention. The Grand River Conservation Authority—a complete watershed, not boundaries. There's no line on a map that says water flows a certain somewhere. We have several municipalities that work together to make sure our groundwater watershed is done correctly. To the experts at the Grand River Conservation Authority, thank you for the wonderful work you do, thank you for the protection of our water. This is what we need to do collectively as a province. Thank you very much, member. I appreciate your resolution.

The Deputy Speaker: Mrs Sandals, the member for Guelph-Wellington, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs Sandals: I'd like to thank the members for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, St Catharines, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Kitchener Centre, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Toronto-Danforth, Oakville, Perth-Middlesex, and Brant, which I think covers most of the province, for speaking to my motion this morning.

There have been a few issues that came up that I would like to address. Protecting the Great Lakes was mentioned, and certainly that's something that matters. Protecting surface water has been mentioned, and that's something that is also important. All of these issues will be dealt with in our source water protection legislation.

1100

But what we're doing this morning is focusing on groundwater. I would like to comment that the entire province can't be included in the greenbelt, and, recognizing that, we have put forward the Places to Grow legislation that looks at long-range planning outside the greenbelt. What we're highlighting with this motion is the need to look at protecting our groundwater sources as we plan for growth outside the greenbelt.

I think it was my colleague for Kitchener Centre who spoke about the idea of intelligent growth. We can only plan for growth intelligently if we identify our groundwater resources, and that requires a lot of research. The GRCA is one of the leaders at this, and they don't have the whole picture yet. But we have to work on mapping our ground resources. Then we need to make sure that when we figure out how they work, we protect them so our drinking water will be there for future generations. And in order to do that, I encourage all members to support this motion.

CELEBRATION OF HELLENIC HERITAGE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA FÊTE DU PATRIMOINE HELLÉNIQUE

Mr Duguid moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario / Projet de loi 150, Loi proclamant un jour et un mois de fête du patrimoine hellénique en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, you have 10 minutes, Mr Duguid.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm pleased to place before this Legislature Bill 150, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario.

Before I speak about what this bill will do and why it's important, I want to begin by acknowledging the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Dr Marie Bountrogianni, who brought this bill forward during her time in opposition. Ms Bountrogianni is not only the proud member for Hamilton Mountain, but a very respected and successful representative of our Greek

community right across Ontario. She's on her way here now, and she'll be speaking to this bill later on.

Democratic renewal is a very current topic these days, not only in this Legislature and in Ottawa, but right around the world. Here in Ontario we're beginning to debate a number of potential political variations and structures in hopes of finding a way to engage more citizens in the democratic process and help reinvigorate interest and participation in our system of government. While in other countries, such as Ukraine, we see people having to take to the streets to ensure that their democratic rights are preserved and protected, we see here in Ontario an increasingly diminishing number of people participating in elections and an increasingly tainted amount of cynicism in our political system.

Any examination of democratic renewal has to begin with an understanding of what democracy is, not only its definition, but its origin and evolution. Democracy clearly has its roots in ancient Hellas or Greece. Without the vision cultivated in ancient Hellas or Greece, it is hard to imagine the emergence of democracy around the world. However, democracy is not the only contribution the Hellenes have made to our western civilization.

Tremendous advances were achieved in the arts, the sciences and the humanities. Hellenic or Greek sculpture, poetry, theatre and music were all of a level of sophistication beyond anything ever previously experienced. Many of the scientific terms in common usage today derive from the Greek language. Astronomy, geography, mathematics, medicine, physics and zoology owe their names and much of their terminology to the Hellenes. Aristarchus theorized that the earth revolves around the sun and rotates on its axis daily. Euclid gathered all the geometric knowledge of the time and published it. Archimedes contributed many of the important mathematical theorems. Ptolemy built a library to house all the known books in the world. Next to the library, a museum was constructed, where scholars produced encyclopaedias of knowledge.

Several schools of philosophy arose as well: the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Skeptics and the Cynics. It's easy to see that the cynics and the skeptics still exist, and I think many of them fill the opposition benches these days. But this is private members' hour, and I don't want to get partisan when I say that, because I know full well that there were skeptics and cynics in the government benches when they were in opposition as well. So let's be straight about that.

At this point, I'm sure a few of you are wondering—and I know Mr Prue on the other side is—"Is Duguid a Greek name?" I can assure you it's not; in fact, it's Scottish. My ancestry is Scottish, Irish, Ukrainian and Russian. My interest in Greek heritage was not sparked by personal ancestry; it was sparked by my involvement with the Scarborough-Florina fraternization policy that was adopted by the city of Scarborough many years ago—decades ago.

My old friend and mentor, a former member of this House, the last mayor of Scarborough, Frank Faubert, was an integral part of the strong relationship between

Scarborough and Florina. Frank Faubert loved our Greek community and they loved him back 10-fold. Frank headed a committee in fact to move the Olympic Games to Greece permanently during the 1980s.

Back in those days, I was his executive assistant when he was in this place. I'll never forget the time when he stood in his place here in this chamber and made a statement about the need for supporting putting the Olympic Games in Athens, Greece. The only problem was, Toronto was bidding at the same time. He got in a little bit of trouble for making that statement, but he didn't care.

Interjection.

Mr Duguid: A lot of people were a little upset at him for that. But you know what? He didn't care, because he thought it was the right place for the Olympic Games. He supported it then, and the Greek community loved him all the better for it.

Frank Faubert was passionately committed to the Florina-Scarborough fraternization. I know that his wife, Marilyn, is watching us here this morning on her television set. I can tell you that you could not visit the Faubert family or the Faubert household without hearing stories of Marilyn's and Frank's trips to Florina, of which they told many: stories of their adventures, stories of their love of the culture and the history of Greece.

Florina is a town in the northwest of Greece. There are a number of families in Scarborough who have their roots in Florina. The annual Scarborough-Florina fraternization celebrations have been something that I have rarely missed in the 10 years that I've been elected by the people of Scarborough. I can tell you that in attending those events, they're always very entertaining and well attended. There's always an air of pride by everybody there in being Greek, but there's also an equal air of pride in being Canadian. It's really something to behold.

Scarborough has even named a street after Florina, Greece, and in Florina, Greece, there's a street named after Scarborough. So it's a very close relationship that has developed over 20 years. This is one of the few Scarborough traditions to survive the amalgamation of Toronto, so I'm very proud of this tradition.

I'd like to speak a little bit about the impact of our Greek community in my riding of Scarborough Centre and right across Toronto and Ontario. Of our five MPs representing Scarborough, two of them are of Greek heritage: John Cannis from my riding of Scarborough Centre and Jim Karygiannis from Scarborough-Agincourt. Both of these MPs have served their community and served their country for over 10 years. Both have served Scarborough well and are very, very proud of their Greek heritage and history. I'm proud to be able to call both of these individuals my friends.

Earlier this year, the Hellenic Home for the Aged was opened in my riding at the corner of Lawrence Avenue and Kennedy Road. This is the fifth Hellenic Home for the Aged to open in Ontario and has already become a very important part of our community in Scarborough. I want to acknowledge all members of the Greek community and others who made the Hellenic Home for the

Aged in Scarborough a reality. It will serve our community for generations, and it's something we're all very proud of.

I've talked about why this bill is important to me, but let me also tell you a little bit about the bill itself. If this bill is passed, each year we'll be proclaiming March 25 to be Hellenic Heritage Day and the month of March each year will be proclaimed as Hellenic History and Heritage Month. Why March 25? March 25 is the National Day of Greece. It celebrates the day in 1821 when Bishop Germanos hoisted the Greek flag over the monastery of Agia Lavra, signalling the beginning of the Greek War of Independence.

It's important to note that this bill has great support in our Greek community. There are a number of representatives of the Greek community here today. I will introduce them, but I'll wait until later on to do that, because I only have a couple of minutes here. I want to thank them for coming. A number of members will be joining me afterwards as well to celebrate what we hopefully will do here today.

1110

As my time winds down, I just want to say that it has been an incredible year for our Greek community. The victory of the national Greek soccer team at the Euro Cup last July 4 set off celebrations in Toronto, across Ontario, and around the world like we've never seen before. I can recall my neighbour a couple of doors down, Savvas, coming down in his sports car, honking away with his Greek flags flying in the wind after the victory, pulling into his driveway a couple of doors down from me, jumping out of the car and yelling down the street to me, jumping about six feet off the ground and saying, "Brad, we shocked the world." And do you know what? They did shock the world; they really did.

Then, of course, this past summer we all remember the magical Olympic Games held in Athens, Greece. The experts said they couldn't do it. Months before the games were to open, the media claimed they would never be ready, but they proved everyone wrong and ran an excellent Olympic Games back where they originally started, in Athens, Greece. My late friend Frank Faubert would have been proud to see the Olympic Games finally returning to Athens. His dream was fulfilled as Athens welcomed the world.

It's time to recognize the enormous impact on our society of our Hellenic heritage. I hope I can count on the support of all members of this Legislature for this bill to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have spoken to the member and am certainly in support of the bill that he's putting forth, which will proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario.

I'm speaking on this bill also out of self-interest. My wife Helen's mother came to Canada in 1956 from Greece, actually the island of Ios, and she settled here. They are from Windsor. I can tell you that the

contribution that the Greek community has made not only in Windsor but in Detroit has been significant.

Also, in my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, the Greek community has established itself as very strong in the business community. In our riding, there are a number of restaurants that have been operated, for example, in terms of their business acumen—I can name a few: Shirley's, Casa Mia and the Town and Country restaurants are operated by people of Greek heritage and are the most successful restaurants, actually, in the community. I have good friends—I had a young chap who used to work with me named George Sardelis, and his father, Dino, and the whole family are tremendous contributors to the business community; the Nitsopoulos family; and a friend of mine with whom I practised law at one time, in renting the same space in the building, was John Alousis. Those people have made significant contributions to the community. They're good corporate citizens; they're good citizens per se. So certainly it's time we recognize that.

The member mentioned the Honourable Dr Marie Bountrogianni. She's of Greek heritage. I know she has been very involved in Greece, and certainly through our Canadian government—I certainly want to state that I appreciate the work she's doing, but I would like to see a little bit more work done in an area that affects my riding, which is the children's treatment centre, which I have spoken up very, very passionately about. I actually was at a Christmas get-together for children on Sunday, at the Optimist Club. It was a Christmas party for children with cancer. All of the children go to Sick Kids for radiation treatment and are also children who would benefit from the children's treatment centre. I can't pass up the opportunity because, quite frankly, our area of Simcoe county and York region is the only area in the province that doesn't have a children's treatment centre. I know the minister wrote to me yesterday indicating that her ministry is studying the issue. I urge her to stop studying it and to approve the process because we have a capital site that we would have, without any cost to the province, in Barrie, and it's high time that this children's treatment centre was approved by the minister.

I wanted to say that I was asked by the parents on Sunday, at this Christmas party for the children that were suffering from cancer and also from developmental disabilities, that it's important that we get that in our riding. I want to make it very clear to the minister that we appreciate the review but it is time to appropriate the funds. They're looking for about \$11 million per year to operate it, and I don't think that's out of line because the fact of the matter is, every other area in the province other than Simcoe county and York region does have a children's treatment centre. It's not right they have to go to other areas to get treated for things that they could be treated for in their own area.

I just want to say to the member that certainly this is something that is long overdue. I know that we've had other days by which we've recognized different ethnic groups in the province and their contribution, and I commend them for the work that he's doing. I don't know

where he's going for his celebration, but maybe he can pass it on in his response.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a privilege and an honour to speak to this bill today. I want to start out by saying something that is trite but absolutely true, and everyone should recognize it in our society: In fact, we are all Greeks. If you live in western society, if you live in North America, you know that almost everything we are as Canadians, almost everything we are in the western hemisphere, almost everything we hold dear came from Greece and from Greeks. Our art is Greek. Our architecture is Greek. Our science is Greek. Our medicine is Greek. Our religion, if you are a Christian, is Greek. Our philosophy and our great philosophers have their roots in Greece. Our politics and our democracy comes originally from Greece, and even our sports have Greek traditions. We are all in fact Greeks.

I'd just like to expand on that for a little bit because people might think that's a little bit strange. Our art finds its traditions in ancient Greece from cycladic art, but also the art of later styles. When you look at the statues that many people will see around the world, they all have their origins in Greece. The great painters of the time were Greek and the whole tradition of painting and art, the whole tradition of the arts themselves, whether they be plays, whether they be poetry, whether they be the written word of Homer, all have their traditions in Greece. The very famous architecture of the past—of course everyone knows the Parthenon, but if you stop and think where the wonders of the ancient world were—there were seven of them, and only two were of non-Greek origin: the great pyramids of Giza and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. The other five were all Greek. Even though they are not today in modern-day Greece, if you look at which ones those were, the wonders of the ancient world: the Colossus of Rhodes, on the island of Rhodes; the great temple to Zeus at Olympus; the temple of Artemis, which is in modern-day Turkey, but Artemis was a Greek goddess, and the temple was built by the Greeks. I'm trying to remember all of them as I speak. The Mausoleum of Mausolus, which is in modern-day Turkey, was also of Greek origin. And there was the Great Lighthouse at Alexandria. The great wonders of the world, the architecture, the magnificent monuments that were built, were Greek, and if you go around the world today you will see that that classic style is still emulated even in modern architecture.

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Of course, our science is all Greek. Ask any school-boy; he can tell you who Pythagoras is. Ask anyone about trigonometry or the development of algebra, and they will tell you that they are Greek in origin.

Our medicine: The great Hippocratic oath that doctors to this day still state when they are called to be doctors emanates from Hippocrates in Greece.

Our religion: the importance of Christianity and the whole Greek influence of thought. People, if they are Christian, know that Christ originally came from the area of modern-day Israel, but what they forget all too often is

that as Christianity expanded, it was expanded throughout the Greek world into Greek cities by Saul, later known as Paul, and that almost the entire New Testament was written in Greek and the concepts of the expanding new religion were all Greek thoughts. The idea of the Trinity is a Greek thought. It is completely foreign to Judaic thought. We today, those who hold the Christian faith, will be very familiar with the Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost—and that is a Greek concept. One can see how that flourished in Greece.

I once had the opportunity to go to a lovely place called Meteora. You can see how the monks go up these enormous hills—I don't want to call them mountains. There's no access and they have to be hauled up on makeshift elevators, where everything is hauled up the mountain. They lived on the top of the mountain cloistered from the world. If you go there, you can see how the Orthodox faith developed and maintained itself through wars and pestilence and everything else that has happened to Greece.

We all know about the politics of Athens, which was the first development of democracy in the ancient world. We all know about that. Mr Duguid was talking about the sceptics. I would also like to remind him about democracy in Athens because they had something absolutely unique that I think might be useful in this House. Whenever something went wrong, whenever they lost a battle or somebody gave terrible advice and a calamity resulted, of course they couldn't punish everyone in the democracy but they had to have a scapegoat. So they developed a thing called an ostrakoi. They put names on clay and put them in a pot and they pulled someone's name out and that person became ostracized. That's where we get that word. I would think maybe the members opposite, when things go very badly, should do the same. They should put all the members' names, the 71 of the government, in the hat and pull one out and that person can be the scapegoat and sent away for the misgivings. So if we want to talk about democracy, this is a Greek tradition I think we could possibly welcome.

We also are indebted to the Olympic Games, which were developed in Olympus, in western Greece, and existed throughout the entire history of the ancient Greek world and were embraced by the Romans. That is a tradition that is absolutely amazing. It is a tradition that is some 4,000 years old, in its earliest steps developing as an agricultural festival.

Greece itself has survived wars, conquests and invasions. In spite of all of the things—the melting pot that was Greece and continues to be Greece—the flavour of Greece, the essence of Greece, has survived. Not only has it survived, it has been embraced by the world.

I am reminded of a saying by Horace. Horace, of course, being a Roman, wrote the following, and I think it was absolutely as true in his time as it is in ours:

Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artes
Intulit agresti Latio.

That means, "Greece, once overcome, overcame her wild conqueror, and brought the arts into rustic Latium."

The Romans invaded Greece, the Romans conquered Greece, but then the Romans themselves became Greek. To this day, if you go to Rome and look at the architecture of that city, the art, the plays and the poetry, they are all Greek. Even though the Greeks themselves may have been conquered in a time of war, it was the Greek brilliance that shone through and lasted forever and infected, in a good way, the Roman tradition. It is as vibrant today as it was then.

We know of the great Alexander, who went on to conquer the entire known world and died by the time he was 32, having conquered every land the people in that area had heard of or knew of. We know his legacy lived on for many years through the Ptolemies, the Seleucids and the Antigonids. Ptolemies and Seleucids are easy, but the Antigonids are tough ones to remember.

We know his legacy lasted forever. We know his legacy lasted down into the Roman period. In fact, when Rome itself fell, when the barbarian hordes came in in the fifth century and Rome fell, was sacked and was gone and that civilization went into complete eclipse, it survived in Greece and Byzantium for another 1,000 years. The Greeks themselves kept alive the arts, architecture and science in Constantinople and in all of the areas of Greece and places where Greeks lived.

We owe an absolutely huge debt to the Greeks, because what has survived from the ancient world survived as a result of the Byzantine Empire, survived as a result of Greeks insisting that the arts, culture and science survive. Greece went into a long period, one would say, of decline, after that period in 1453 and was part of the Ottoman Empire, but the Greeks never, ever gave up what they believed in: democracy and their country.

It wasn't until the 19th century, when people started to see what was happening in the world—in the United States, in France and the colonies of Great Britain, like Canada, that were struggling to be free and that were getting constitutional rights—the people in Greece were no exception. They had been invaded and conquered but their will and spirit had never, ever been defeated. In 1821, the first movement was taken to throw off that yoke of oppression, and by 1827, Greece was a free nation.

The year 1821 is a remarkable year in Greek history, remarkable for the heroes of that period. One hero, who is not too well known in Canada but who is revered throughout Greece, is Kolokotronis: how he went to the initial battles—a brilliant field marshal—how he mobilized the Greeks and how he was able to overthrow superior armies. If you go to almost every little town in Greece today, you will see a statue to that great man, and he deserves to be remembered for the liberation of his country.

For the few minutes remaining, I would like to talk about other Greek groups, such as the Pontians. I am proud to say I am a Pontian.

Remarks in Greek.

Pontians are a group from Asia Minor. They lived there for 3,000 years. They were Greek-speaking people. At the time of Atatürk, they were forcefully and forcibly

removed from their home of some 3,000 years and they were sent packing. Many of them died. There is no doubt in my mind they were persecuted and no doubt in my mind that it was a pogrom. They had nowhere to go. Many of them returned to Greece, although they no longer spoke the same language because 3,000 years of separation had changed a great deal. But they went to Greece and they did remarkable things in that country. They revitalized the agricultural industry and they built and rebuilt Greece.

There is a very strong Pontian community in Toronto. There is a statue, I am proud to say, for the Pontian community in East York. It is one of the only statues to commemorate the deaths and the problems of that wonderful people. It is located near the Walter Stewart library in East York. It is a tremendous statue, and Pontians from all over the world come to remember their past, to remember what happened between 1916 and 1921. They come and continue to come—

Interjections.

Mr Prue: Mr Speaker, I'm having a hard time even hearing myself.

The Deputy Speaker: Me too. The level of conversation in here is rising. I'd like to hear the speaker, please. Please have some order.

1130

Mr Prue: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

That statue continues to be there. Pontians come from around the world and remember the problems of their forefathers but also the strength in what their community continues to do.

As I said, I am proud to be a Pontian. I have been adopted. I am the only adopted Pontian, I think, in the world, and I have a plaque to that effect in my office. I'm very proud to say that I am a Pontian.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Where are your documents?

Mr Prue: It's in my office. Come and look. It was in 2000, so I've been a Pontian for four years now.

The Greeks in Canada have prospered. They have done extremely well over all of the years. We in East York are proud that we are twinned with a city in Greece, the city of Tripolis. I have been there. It is a wonderful, remarkable community. The Greeks in East York number up to 7,000 people and in my riding make up about 4% of the population.

I invite people from across Ontario to experience Greek culture in Canada. Please come to the Danforth. If you want to taste the finest food of Greek origin in the world, come to the Danforth. If you want to see the *joie de vivre* of the Greek people, come to the Danforth. You will see that they know how to enjoy life. They know how to celebrate who and what they are. I thank all of them for the contribution they have made to our society. Canada is a better place. And the world truly is Greek.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): It really is a pleasure to rise today to support Bill 150. I'd like to begin by congratulating the member for Scarborough Centre, Mr Duguid, for bringing this forward. He has

brought forward a piece of legislation that would bring province-wide recognition of the important contribution of the Greek community in his own community of Scarborough Centre but also of the 100,000 people of Greek descent who live in Ontario. Following in the footsteps of his mentor, the late Frank Faubert, Mr Duguid has taken a strong interest in the Greek community in Scarborough, and I know this legislation is a direct result of that interest.

This debate allows us to acknowledge many of the signature contributions of Hellenic civilization to all civilizations, to civilization writ large, the system we know as democracy being chief among those but also the tremendous contributions in terms of art, literature and philosophy. We mustn't, as a society, underestimate those contributions.

We've heard about the Greek contribution in Scarborough Centre, and I know Dr Bountrogianni is going to be talking about the contribution in the community of Hamilton. Like so many communities around Ontario, my community of Don Valley West has benefited from a strong Greek presence. In particular, the community of Thorncliffe Park has been home to a significant Greek presence since its construction in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Today, Thorncliffe Park is home to the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto, on Overlea Boulevard, and St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, as well as the headquarters of the Greek Community of Metropolitan Toronto and the Cypriot Community of Toronto on Thorncliffe Park Drive.

The other thing I want to talk about is the informal organization of the Greek community in Thorncliffe Park. On any given morning, I can go to the Tim Hortons in Thorncliffe Park and I will find many members of the Greek community from that area having their conversation, having their daily check-in. I think about that group, and when I go and speak to them what I'm seeing is the way democracy works. People talk to each other. There's a town square. There's a place to gather. We shouldn't underestimate that tradition in the Greek community.

I'd like to acknowledge that Thorncliffe Park's vibrancy is in no small part a result of the Greek community that settled there. I'd like to recognize the community leadership provided by Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios, who's been a strong advocate for the Greek community in Don Valley West, as well as the important role played by Reverend Charalambos at St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church.

This bill and the heritage day and month it'll create will give us an opportunity to recognize our Greek community as an integral part of the Ontario mosaic. I think that's something we should all be able to support. That recognition of the varied ethnocultural communities is an integral part of our understanding of who we are in Ontario, and the fact that it is all but a cliché really demonstrates how far we have come along this road as a society.

So I'm happy to support this bill. For Greek Canadians, its passage will signal a recognition of their con-

tribution to this society, and for the rest of us it brings us an opportunity to celebrate and increase our awareness of Greek heritage. Thank you, Mr Duguid, for introducing the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Mississauga East.

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, or in Greek, epharisto, and epharisto to our guests. I would like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for bringing this bill forward, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario.

Before I start, I'm going to say that it is a little difficult for me to get up here today. My background is that I'm a Portuguese Canadian. To see Portugal and Greece in that Euro 2004 final was riveting. It was a difficult loss for the Portuguese Canadians. But what was great was that everybody was able to come out on the streets and celebrate in a very peaceful way. Everybody was waving their flags. I thought it was a great celebration and a great show of what we have here in Ontario, where all cultures can come together and celebrate in great Hellenic tradition, one of democracy. For me to get up here, I'm being a good sport, and that comes from my Olympic background.

The opportunity I had to travel to Greece this past summer to watch the Olympic Games was tremendous. My days as a marathon runner are far behind me, but I wanted to make sure that I did the old course, so I went out to Marathon and made my way from Marathon to Athens. It didn't take me what it used to take me, two hours and a few minutes; it took me a good deal longer, almost half a day, because I stopped at many restaurants and spoke to many people. The culture was just tremendous. The people were so warm and the food was terrific. When we talk about a healthy culture, we talk about the Greeks. The Mediterranean diet is one of the healthiest diets in the world. They have one of the longest lifespans in the world because of using olive oil. All those viewing today should get out to a Greek restaurant in your community and eat some of that fantastic food: the olive oils, the salads, the cheeses, the souvlaki. It was all wonderful.

The Olympics are what is so important to me from the Greek culture because they touched me so greatly, from the first games in 776 BC to the modern-day Olympics that came back to Greece in 1896 and have continued. It's really where the world comes together in a peaceful way and we're able to celebrate Olympic values of peace and fairness and fraternity, and the human spirit and breaking barriers. I was able to bring forward a private member's bill, my Olympic Day bill, which really complements and works so well with this act that the member from Scarborough Centre has brought forward. During my time in Greece, I got a chance to go out to the Panathenean Stadium, the old stadium.

All I say is that for all those who haven't been to Greece, get out there. It's a wonderful country, wonderful people, and we're so glad to have a great Greek population here in our province.

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Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure this morning to join in the debate during private members' hour on Bill 150, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario. It has been put forward by the member from Scarborough Centre, who I know has a strong Greek community in his riding. I commend him for bringing this bill forward. I think it's very important to recognize the effect of Greek culture on the world, and particularly here in Ontario.

I had to consult my dictionary to get the exact description of what Hellenistic means. As an adjective, it's "of or relating to the period of Greek history, language and culture." The time of the expansion of Greece was a long time ago: 323 to 331 BC. That was the period during which Greek culture spread throughout the Mediterranean and into the Near East. So many important features of modern civilization come from Greece, whether it be freedom and democracy, first developed by ancient Greeks, or as Mr Fonseca just mentioned, the birthplace of the Olympics. This year we had a very successful Olympics in Greece.

For me, the experience is more personal. I think of Parry Sound-Muskoka and the people I've come to know of Greek origin from my own riding; for example, people like Tom Tzavidas, who owned a Subway in Bracebridge for many years. I tend to run into him around the Bracebridge hockey arena because his kids have played on the same hockey teams as some of my kids. I know how much he cares for his family and how much he's given back to the town of Bracebridge over many years.

Also in Bracebridge are the owners of the Apollo Restaurant, Peter and Barbara Kokotsis. Incidentally, Apollo is the sun god and patron of music and poetry. Peter is Greek, and Barbara is actually German, so on the menu there is Greek and German food. It's an excellent restaurant, and if you happen to be in Bracebridge, I would highly recommend that you try it out.

I've also seen just how generous the people of the Greek community are in my area. I think of the owners of the Family Restaurant in Huntsville, Dino and Bessie Georges. I met them because I attended the Spring Fling in Huntsville. It's the biggest fundraiser of the year for the Huntsville Hospital and hundreds of people attend this event. All the food was cooked and donated by Dino and Bessie Georges's Family Restaurant in Huntsville. They've continued to do that for a number of years and are very generous in giving back to the community in a big way. It was a pleasure to meet them there. After that, I decided I had better visit the restaurant and try it out, except the first time I went, it was too full, too busy, because it's so popular. I went back another time and enjoyed a nice meal at the Family Restaurant.

I've bumped into other people of Greek descent who have been extremely generous. In 1985, I bumped into Nick Mirkopoulos, whom I met at an event. He subsequently invited me to a Greek Easter celebration, which was a big event. I think they roasted 14 lambs outside on spits. It was a lot of fun for me to attend, and also great to see some of the Greek culture.

Subsequent to that, our number two daughter, Renéé, was born in 1985, and Nick sent us this beautiful white embroidered dress for our new baby, which we still have. In fact, I was talking to my wife and she said she saved it and had it out the other day, looking at this wonderful dress.

That's just a personal demonstration of how generous the Greek people have been. They certainly have contributed in our area of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and I think it is very important to recognize this.

This bill will proclaim March 25 of each year as Hellenic Heritage Day. The month of March, and March 25 particularly, have traditionally been a great time of celebration by the Greek community. March 25 actually commemorates the anniversary of the commencement of the Greek War of Independence, 181 years ago, which resulted in the birth of the modern Greek state. Also, the month of March each year is proclaimed as Hellenic History and Heritage Month. As I mentioned, there is an awful lot of history there to be learned. In fact, when I graduated from grade 8, my principal in Bracebridge Public School, Mr Neil Haight, gave me this big, beautiful, bound history book on Greece and Rome, so it was obvious he felt this was something very important that I should be learning as I went on to further studies.

I'm very pleased to support this bill today and recognize the many contributions of the Greek people to our society.

Mr Ruprecht: Congratulations, first, to Mr Duguid on introducing Bill 150, the Celebration of Hellenic Heritage Act.

While we're very cognizant of the fact that our civilization has benefited a great deal from the ancient Greeks, we must also be cognizant of the fact that many Greek Canadians struggled in Canada to maintain a livelihood, to create schools and special places of worship, and to ensure that there is a future for Greek Canadians. We want to be cognizant also that they have made a great contribution.

I had the real pleasure in 1981, for the first time in the history of Toronto, to raise a Greek flag at Toronto city hall, along with Mayor Eggleton. As the admiring throng was looking up at the fluttering flag of Greece, we were reminded of the great sacrifices people have made to ensure this flag flies in a free country.

We also know that Greek Canadians, who have made a great contribution to Canada, are not alone in this struggle. In terms of our own multicultural society, we know that Greek Canadians—I'm quoting right now from my book, which is called *Toronto's Many Faces*, and I have a chapter here about the Greek Canadians.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Commercials are out of order.

Mr Ruprecht: This is a very important book.

I want to make sure I don't go over my time, because the Minister of Citizenship is Greek Canadian and I want to be sure she gets her five minutes.

Let me just say, in conclusion, that "Toronto's Greek community numbers around 130,000, a striking contrast

to the 20 Greek names that appeared in the 1907 *Might's* Directory. Many of the first Greek immigrants ... were young men, most of them refugees, who came in the 1890s to work in agriculture or in northern Ontario's mines, forests and railways." Many of them also were professionals, especially "Dr Petros Constantinides, an eminent scholar and surgeon who arrived in Toronto in 1864. Today, the community is proud of its more than 15,000 professionals."

In short, we're delighted at the contributions Greek Canadians have made, and we certainly congratulate them today on this very special day.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a very distinct pleasure to rise today and respond to the member from Scarborough Centre, Mr Duguid, on his Bill 150, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario. I too will be supporting this initiative to celebrate March 25 as Hellenic Heritage Day.

I wanted to rise for a couple of minutes on this bill to reflect on how important the role of Mr Duguid or all members is to respect and promote their own particular view of the world, as well as the culture and heritage they respect and represent in their riding.

I had the very distinct pleasure—I think the bill I passed here was Bill 133; I believe that's the bill number. I introduced the bill two or three times, on Irish heritage. As such, during more amicable times here in the House, toward the end of the session, oftentimes they put together a private member's bill, of which this is one, and without much debate they pass second and third reading and it's given royal assent. I had that privilege last year. Irish heritage, my bill, Mr Duguid, was similar: to respect the rich contribution that cultures generally and broadly make to our collective standard of living, our wealth and mosaic culture, that we all enjoy and celebrate.

I had the privilege last Christmas, I guess it was, at the end of the session, to go to the Speaker's chambers and then from there to the Lieutenant Governor's chambers and see the bill actually sent to law. So I wish you good luck, and certainly you have my support. From my own experience, it made me feel very gratified that I actually made a statement while in my time here that meant something to somebody just beyond myself, to my children and to my community, and I wish you luck in that context.

In my attempt to familiarize myself with some of the background, I know a number of very productive and engaging friends—I would call them friends—the Bastas family from my riding. They started out here—I don't think they were in Canada all that long, perhaps a decade or two, and they had a very successful restaurant business and a bit of catering. I think there were three brothers involved. My wife, Peggy, and I often go to the Massey House restaurant, which is in Newcastle. It is still run by Gus and Karen Bastas. It's wonderful food from a very diverse menu, and the menu always has a couple of Greek dishes that we enjoy.

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I would say that each of us, as I've heard Mr Prue speak earlier today, and Ms Wynne as well, would like to

encourage all members to reflect, respect and represent our diverse communities. It does enrich all of our lives.

I went to a Catholic high school, and you had a couple of choices of study. Mostly they were the classics at the school I went to; I'm one of the older group here. You could take Greek or Latin and/or French. A lot of people took Latin and, obviously, they often chose to study Greek history and took Greek as another subject if they were in the arts area.

Some of the things I jotted down here: It's a rich tapestry of history. If you think back to Homer, he recounted history through poetry and stories. But it always fascinated me, just looking at the size of the country where half of the civilized world lived at that time in history, back in 1150, roughly. During the Bronze Age, their Mediterranean area was about the size of Manhattan. You could drive across it in less than a day today. But much of our birthplace of democracy and civilization as we know it today did happen in that culture.

With respect to the work you've contributed to this and to my opportunity to encourage all members to rise and try to bring forward their suggestions, I would say congratulations. I will be there to celebrate the March 25 anniversary or recognition of Hellenic Day.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Children and Youth Services and the member for Hamilton Mountain.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Today I rise as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I thank my good friend and colleague from Scarborough Centre, Brad Duguid, for introducing this bill. As you all know in this House, those who were here, I first introduced it a couple of years ago. I was very proud to have raised the Greek flag two years ago in March for the first time in the history of the Legislature. The bill itself did not go to third reading and did not get proclaimed, but the spirit was there and I knew that some day it would. I really, really thank Brad Duguid, my colleague from Scarborough Centre.

I'm extremely proud, as the only Greek Canadian in the Legislature, to be here to talk to this bill today. In a way it's honouring our dual heritage. It is honouring the fact that we're a unique culture: Greek and Canadian. Like most people in Ontario, we have this unique mix of two cultures. We're so lucky to be from our wonderful cultures, in this case the Greek culture, with its rich history, the initiation of democracy in that country—

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I wish I were Greek.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Jim Bradley, the Minister of Tourism, wishes he were Greek. That's fine, Jim—as well as being in such a wonderful province and being able to fulfill our potential as a community, which we have.

The young people of the Greek community are overrepresented, for example, in universities. Education is very important to families. Those who, because of poverty and political issues, couldn't go to school in

Greece made a point of sending their children to higher education here. We were the second-largest community, actually, with respect to representation in post-secondary education in the 1970s and 1980s. I'm very proud of that and very thankful to my parents and my parents' generation for pushing that.

I was very proud, not only as a Greek Canadian but as Ontario's representative for citizenship and immigration, to be invited by the Greek Parliament to the Olympics this past summer. My friend the honourable member from Mississauga East, Peter Fonseca, was there as well. It was so special.

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Well, it was not paid for by the Ontario taxpayer. It was at the hospitality of the Greeks, and if anyone knows anything about Greeks, they know that hospitality is number one.

It was such an honour to be there, and they did such an amazing job. I was very proud of the job of the Greek people and the Greek government. The Olympics were beautiful. We were very proud. The opening and closing ceremonies were the classiest I've ever seen. I know I'm biased, but this was a bias that was shared by everyone I spoke to in Athens. Athens was transformed into the most beautiful city in Europe—unbelievable. And to think of all the negative propaganda against the Olympics and how they'd be dangerous, insecure and so forth. We all proved them wrong, once again, that we are capable as a nation, as a civilization and as a country. I'm so, so proud of that.

I'm also proud of our rich history, and trying my best as a mother of two Greek Canadian children—third generation now—to teach them the language and the history. We try and go back every summer so that they know and they see their roots. And on days like today—and of course March 25, our Independence Day—I'm well aware of my late grandparents' and my late father's stories of the wars, of the multiple wars that my grandparents went through, right from Asia Minor, to Greece, to civil war, to two world wars and to amazing political disruptions and dictatorships. But thankfully, there is a democracy in Greece today; there has been for some 25-odd years. We're very thankful for that. Democracy is complex, but it's still the best system in the world. The Greeks invented it. We honour it here in this wonderful country and in this beautiful province.

I'll just say a few words in Greek now. Don't worry to translate it from Greek to French if you can't do it. I'll do my best to translate it if you'd like.

Remarks in Greek.

This is emotional. I'm very, very proud to be here. I'm very thankful to my colleague Brad Duguid for introducing this bill, and I'm also very thankful for what my parents gave me, as well as for what my culture gave me. I'm very happy to be part of the introduction of this bill.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I only have a few seconds. I just want to congratulate the member for his bill and hope that it goes. I was proud to

bring in Tartan Day for Scottish heritage on April 6. I will vote for your bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre, Mr Duguid, you have two minutes.

Mr Duguid: I can't do this justice in two minutes. I thank all members for their comments and I'll acknowledge them each in a minute. But first I want to introduce some guests who have come from the Greek community here in Toronto to join us today.

First, Ms Angeliki Prassouli, vice-consul of the Greek consulate—if she could stand; Costas Menegakis, president of the Greek Community of Metropolitan Toronto; Eleni Tsikritsis, vice-president of the Greek Community of Metropolitan Toronto; Theodore Antonopoulos, secretary-general of the Greek Community of Metropolitan Toronto; and my very good friend Gus Klisouras, president of the Hellenic Canadian Educators Association of Ontario. I thank them for coming.

Again, I thank all the members who spoke in this debate. The member for Beaches-Woodbine said it well: "We're all Greeks." And for those who don't believe that, they'll probably believe this: If you're not Greek, you probably wish you were. So you're one or the other. He gave an excellent presentation. He knows well the Hellenic culture and he knows well the beauty of the Danforth, which is really the Mecca of Greek culture, probably, here in Canada.

The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford showed his knowledge of the contribution of the Greek community right across Ontario. The member for Don Valley West talked about the Greek community's contribution in her own community and spoke very, very eloquently about it. The member for Mississauga East spoke about his personal experience as an Olympian and how that captures the Hellenic culture and spirit. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka spoke well of the contributions of Greek members in his area. The member for Davenport talked about his book and the contributions of the Greek community in his area as well. The member for Durham spoke about his Irish bill, which is similar to this. And the member for Bruce-Grey spoke about Tartan Day.

In the 10 seconds that are left, I want to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain. She's been an incredible representative here in this House. She makes us all very proud, but I know I can speak on behalf of the Greek community that she makes them incredibly proud of all that she has accomplished for them and for us.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allowed for private members' public business has expired.

WATER SUPPLY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We'll first deal with private member's notice of motion number 32, standing in the name of Mrs Sandals.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I counted three. There is no argument about it, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: I counted three. It is carried.

CELEBRATION OF HELLENIC HERITAGE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA FÊTE DU PATRIMOINE HELLÉNIQUE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item 46, Bill 150, standing in the name of Mr Duguid.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Duguid?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Duguid has asked that it be referred to public accounts. Agreed? Agreed.

All matters having to do with private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1201 until 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STEVEN TRUSCOTT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Steven Truscott's lawyer is working to have his 1959 conviction for a schoolmate's murder overturned. He always maintained his innocence but disappeared into anonymous existence after he was paroled in 1969.

As you're aware, since 2000 Mr Truscott has gone public in proclaiming his innocence so that he can clear his name for his family's sake. The campaign to exonerate Mr Truscott has led to a judicial review. The federal justice minister said that "there is a reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred."

Like most Liberals, he took the easy way out and, instead of ordering a new trial, referred the case to the Ontario Court of Appeal for review. In January 2002, retired Quebec Judge Fred Kaufman was appointed to do a review of the case. The Attorney General has had the results of that report since April 2004. In his report, Kaufman may recommend that the case be retried or reviewed by the appellate court, or he can recommend a pardon.

A man's chance to clear his name hangs in the balance. The Attorney General has continued the Liberal tradition of taking the easy way out by refusing to make the report public. Chief Justice Roy McMurtry is quoted in the Toronto Star today as saying he "has no objections to the release of the report publicly." The Chief Justice recognizes the need to expedite the hearing.

I say to the Attorney General, stop hiding the Kaufman report. Why have you refused to release the Kaufman report so far? I say to the Attorney General, why

don't you stand up today and agree to release the Kaufman report publicly?

HOLIDAY SERVICE

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): This time of year in Ontario is full of charitable good feeling in our communities. As residents of a cold, dark, northern climate, we long for light and warmth as winter takes hold. So candles burn at the heart of our festivals as we gather family and friends close to us.

But this can be a lonely time of year for many in our communities. Ask any faith leader, social worker, community police officer, nurse, therapist or teacher, and they will all tell you that this can be a brutally difficult time of year for people without family or whose family members are alienated from each other.

Many Ontarians put forth extraordinary efforts at this time of year to help those who need help the most.

I want to thank all those caregivers who work so hard all year but who have an especially important job at this time of year. You are the families for many of the children, seniors and disabled Ontarians who are living in group homes, long-term-care homes and supportive housing. You provide the warmth of the season, and you do it generously.

Thank you to the people who dedicate their lives to running food banks, women's shelters, out-of-the-cold programs and homeless shelters across Ontario for your work all year but especially at this time of year when the emotional and spiritual need compounds the physical need of those living in poverty.

Thank you to the leadership at the Metropolitan Community Church of Ontario, which provides a sanctuary from homophobia for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgender people year-round but especially at this time of year when many members of this community are not welcome in their own families.

Thank you to all Ontarians who dedicate themselves to helping those for whom this season can be a truly difficult time of year. I know my colleagues in the Ontario Legislature share my admiration and gratitude for your work and your humanity.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I rise today to remind the government again of the promise they made on page 13 of their election platform: "We will boost the Ontario film and television tax credit from 20% to 33%." They've been the government for about 14 months now, and this looks to be yet another Fiberal broken promise.

Yesterday at 6 pm, the finance minister sent out a news release saying that he is listening to the film industry's concerns. Ontario's film industry cannot wait while the government dances around the issue, claiming to listen. People are losing their jobs today; business is

leaving Ontario today for the United States and other provinces.

About 1,200 people came to this Legislature on December 1 demanding action, and the government's response is that they are listening. Action is required.

Everyone in Ontario knows we have a crisis in our film industry. The industry has been hard hit of late, and the Liberals, in government, have failed to keep their election promise to increase the tax credit. Other jurisdictions, both Canadian and American, have followed the lead of the former Progressive Conservative government of Ontario in creating the tax credits, often at a higher rate than Ontario is now providing.

There are 20,000 people in this industry—20,000 people who stand to lose their jobs. The time for action is now, so that Ontario can remain competitive on a global scale.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Today marks an historic beginning for government in the agri-food sector. In our platform, Premier McGuinty had a vision where government and the agri-food industry could come together to establish a long-term and open dialogue to ensure a bright and competitive future for the agri-food sector in Ontario. Premier McGuinty recognizes the importance of Ontario's agri-food industry to our social and economic well-being, and today marks that commitment with the inaugural Premier's agri-food summit.

Our Minister of Agriculture and Food, Steve Peters, has been working tirelessly with the industry to ensure that the lines of communication are open, so that the ideas and concerns of the sector as well as their opportunities are brought forward. Minister Peters's commitment to the sector is an impassioned one. He has brought to Ontario the agricultural policy framework. He has made continuous efforts to maintain an open dialogue with all sectors. He has shown continued support for the agricultural sector through BSE funding and transition funding for business risk management.

Today I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Minister Peters, as he was awarded the Canadian renewable fuels award for the exceptional work he has done for this burgeoning industry. This is the greatest honour awarded to individuals who make an extraordinary contribution to the renewable fuel industry. Minister Peters announced a renewable fuel standard for ethanol and has also made significant contributions to the biodiesel industry by announcing his intention to move forward with a parallel strategy.

GAMMA FOUNDRIES

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): "The pollution is just horrendous. You can't breathe," said Geoffrey Long, a resident of Cascade Court, east of Gamma Foundries." That is a quote from the Richmond Hill Liberal on December 5.

Over the past two years, I have worked with Richmond Hill Councillor Arnie Warner, Ministry of the Environment staff, the town of Richmond Hill bylaw department and residents of the Newkirk Road neighbourhood in Richmond Hill with a view to help determine the source, and to eliminate, offensive odours emanating from Gamma Foundries in this neighbourhood in Richmond Hill. Following studies conducted by the Ministry of the Environment, it is absolutely conclusive that these odours are indeed emanating from this foundry.

I've brought this issue to the personal attention of the Minister of the Environment. I now have a letter from her, which unfortunately is not very helpful. After reviewing the details of the issue, she simply concludes by saying, "MOE staff will continue to work with Gamma Foundries to abate the odour problem."

People in this neighbourhood have not been able to walk outside to enjoy their own property as a result of these odours. I am calling today on the Minister of the Environment to take absolute and immediate steps to ensure that these odours are put to an end and that the appropriate orders are issued to this foundry to ensure that the neighbours in this neighbourhood can in fact have rightful enjoyment of their property.

1340

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a bit of a different take on what has been happening in regard to the Ministry of Agriculture and the minister himself. I beg to differ from the member across.

First of all, I remember the promise that was made in the last election. That promise was that the Ministry of Agriculture was going to be a lead ministry. I remember that last year, it didn't become a lead ministry. They cut the budget by \$128 million, and the Minister of Agriculture is not even on P and P, which is priorities and planning of cabinet. How can you be a lead ministry if you don't have the dollars in your ministry to do the job and your minister doesn't have any voice within cabinet? So I wonder why the government is touting that.

I want to say that the Minister of Agriculture misses what has been going on in agriculture. There has been a crisis in agriculture. We all know what has happened with BSE. There have been depressed prices. We know that costs have gone up for the running of the farm. We know that hydro prices are going to be going up as well. What is this government doing to address any of these things? Quite frankly, not a heck of a lot. This government is lurching from crisis to crisis, leaving farmers high and dry.

I've got to take the opportunity to say a couple of words about the Nutrient Management Act. We know that that particular bill requires the government to provide dollars to farmers to be able to comply with the act. We know it's supposed to be \$72 million, but what has the government done? They've put \$20 million forward, and I guess they're saying to farmers, "You are

going to pay the rest." So let me say, you have a strange way of showing your friendliness to the farm community.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Today is International Human Rights Day. Today is a day we recognize the inherent dignity of people. We celebrate the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. We recognize that these rights are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world.

International Human Rights Day celebrates the drafting and passing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations. Today is the 55th anniversary of that ratification. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the inherent dignity and the equal rights of all people in all nations. It has served as a beacon of hope for the world for 55 years.

Today is a day where we remember and advocate for the freedoms of people who are not as fortunate as ourselves. Today we celebrate living in a country where basic human freedoms are enshrined. It is also a day to reflect on those freedoms and what they mean for us here in Ontario.

I hope all members of the House and people of Ontario reflect on what the Universal Declaration of Human Rights means and how fortunate we are, and will understand how much more there is to do.

BUSINESS IN PETERBOROUGH

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise in this House today to share a remarkable achievement for my riding of Peterborough. This month's edition of Canadian Business magazine has named Peterborough the top place in Ontario to do business. Peterborough is a tight-knit community with a high quality of life. It offers top post-secondary institutions, Trent University and Sir Sandford Fleming College, as well as excellent schools. There are plenty of opportunities for cultural and recreational activities.

Peterborough now boasts an enviable unemployment rate of 4.2% and a diverse array of job opportunities, from high-tech to manufacturing. The city is home to large employers such as General Electric and PepsiCo's Quaker Oats. Additionally, German electronics and electrical engineering giant Siemens Milltronics recently announced it would transfer one of its production lines from California to Peterborough. There are also a number of homegrown business success stories, such as Ventra Plastics and auto parts supplier Merit Precision Molding. Five new call centres have opened in the last four years. One of these is operated by the German airline Lufthansa.

The article credits our Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corp for actively seeking out new business investment. The GPAEDC has been one of the driving forces behind the DNA cluster: a private-public partnership that could result in an estimated 5,500

new jobs for Peterborough. The project would bring together all three levels of government, Trent, Sir Sandford Fleming College, as well as partners in the private sector. The cluster would further DNA research through commercialization.

I would like to commend the hard work of the GPAEDC for its contribution in creating a viable and sustainable local economy for our community. Thank you as well to the city and county of Peterborough for their leadership toward this goal.

I would also like to congratulate the people of Peterborough. A highly skilled and innovative workforce is a major factor in companies opening or relocating within our community. It is the people of Peterborough who make the difference and show our community for what it is.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to address our government's recent proposal to the Ontario Medical Association. Our province is at a crossroads in regard to primary health care reform. I feel the time for mere talk is over; now is the time for real action.

I want to go on record and agree with the former Tory Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, when he boldly said in this House in 1996, "All members should be aware, because the government's already announced it, that 1996 will be the year we move ahead on primary care reform." That was talk. If I recall, the number of underserved communities rose under his watch.

Two years later, in 1998, the next in a long line of Tory Ministers of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, stated, "This program"—meaning their new primary care program—"will mean more doctors in underserved areas." That too was just talk. Again, I recall that the number of underserved areas under her watch increased.

There are now 142 underserved communities, a number that doubled while the previous government talked but did not act decisively. Many of those underserved areas are in my riding of Perth-Middlesex. Last month the family doctors in my riding overwhelmingly endorsed this deal. Our Minister of Health, George Smitherman, listened to the concerns of doctors and improved that deal in six key areas.

The time for Tory talk has passed. Working with our most valued doctors, the time for Liberal action is now upon us.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act /
Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis
d'alcool.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 /
Projet de loi 106, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne, the title of which is amended to read "An Act to implement Budget measures /
Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires."

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1347 to 1352.

The Speaker: Mr Hoy has moved the adoption of the report of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fonseca, Peter	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Smith, Monique
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Smitherman, George
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Takhar, Harinder S.
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Van Bommel, Maria
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Watson, Jim
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Wilkinson, John
Cordiano, Joseph	Leal, Jeff	Wong, Tony C.
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Marsales, Judy	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Churley, Marilyn
Dunlop, Garfield

Flaherty, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Miller, Norm
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Tuesday, December 7, 2004, the bill is now ordered for third reading.

VISITORS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have great delight in introducing to this House the president and vice-president of the Federation of Korean Canadian Associations, Mr Hun Yi and Miss An, who are sitting in the east gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): As you know, that is not a point of order.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It is my great privilege to introduce Brother Wayne Samuelson from the Ontario Federation of Labour, who is with us today.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. There are two members who have risen on a point of order which was not a point of order. So that's two; I hope there is not a third.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I go for a third. I would like to introduce two farmers in the member's gallery, John Dumanski and Linda Vandendreische with the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Marketing Board.

The Speaker: Does the member from St Catharines need to recognize anybody?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I would like to introduce anybody in the gallery who has not been introduced yet.

The Speaker: Thank you. So that will put an end to it.

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have today in the gallery two wonderful people from Hamilton who do tremendous work. They are affiliated with something called Today's Child. They purchased me in a Rotarian auction for a good cause to support today's children. I'd like to recognize Marnie Flaherty and Anne Howarth.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FILM CLASSIFICATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE CLASSEMENT DES FILMS

Mr Watson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to replace the Theatres Act and to amend other Acts in respect of film / *Projet de loi 158, Loi remplaçant la Loi sur les cinémas et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les films.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Mr Watson?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I will defer until ministerial statements, please.

1400

PRIVATE SECURITY AND
INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES ACT, 2004LOI DE 2004 SUR LES SERVICES PRIVÉS
DE SÉCURITÉ ET D'ENQUÊTE

Mr Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to revise the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, 1999 / *Projet de loi 159, Loi révisant la Loi sur les enquêteurs privés et les gardiens et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi de 1999 sur le Tribunal d'appel en matière de permis.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Kwinter?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I defer to ministers' statements.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm till 9:30 pm on Thursday, December 9, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion 261. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

The ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1402 to 1407.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Duguid, Brad	Miller, Norm
Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Baird, John R.	Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Flaherty, Jim	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Scott, Laurie
Brotten, Laurel C.	Hudak, Tim	Sergio, Mario
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Smith, Monique
Brownell, Jim	Klees, Frank	Smitherman, George
Bryant, Michael	Kular, Kuldip	Takhar, Harinder S.
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Tascona, Joseph N.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Van Bommel, Maria
Chudleigh, Ted	Levac, Dave	Watson, Jim
Cordiano, Joseph	Marsales, Judy	Wilkinson, John
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Wilson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 63; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

1410

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FILM CLASSIFICATION CLASSEMENT DES FILMS

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I rise today to introduce legislation that will modernize Ontario's outdated film classification system, a system that affects virtually everyone in this province. I'm pleased to inform the House that this new legislation responds to the needs of consumers and parents for a safe and informed marketplace, and at the same time it protects the rights of adults to choose for themselves what film products they see. I believe the new act provides a very balanced approach. This new Film Classification Act, 2004, ensures that consumers will be better informed about movie and video game classification and content information and better able to make responsible, age-appropriate viewing choices.

Comme le savent les députés de cette Chambre, le public est très préoccupé par les jeux vidéo violents et l'impact qu'ils peuvent avoir sur les enfants et les adolescents. Le public réclame des mesures depuis un

bon moment déjà afin de protéger les enfants contre les jeux inappropriés.

With this legislation, the McGuinty government is taking action, and it's not shirking its responsibility. The new legislation continues to regulate the film exhibition and distribution sectors to ensure the industry complies with modern marketplace standards. Parents will get more information on the content and age-appropriateness of movies and video games, and kids will be unable to purchase or rent mature or adult-oriented material.

The important provisions in Bill 70, which was approved by this House just last week, dealing with video games are carried through with this particular piece of legislation.

By limiting the Ontario Film Review Board's authority to censor, this legislation also ensures that adults will be able to choose for themselves what products they wish to view.

I'm proud of the government's ability to provide a balanced and effective response to the many stakeholders affected by this much-needed legislation. As the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, I'm pleased that this legislation also deals with ways to ease the administrative burden for film distributors by creating the opportunity to harmonize classification standards and services with other provinces in Canada. Standardization will also provide more consistent information to the many consumers who are confused by the current overlapping and inconsistency of classification information.

In addition, moving age-specific requirements from the act into the regulations gives us the flexibility to adopt other industry rating systems as my ministry continues to pursue the implementation of a more national approach with other provinces.

On April 30, 2004, in the Glad Day Bookshops case, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice ruled that the Ontario Film Review Board's authority to approve and censor films was too broad and violated freedom of expression. The court suspended the effect of its decision for one year so that the government would have time to develop legislation that separates the board's approval and classification powers. That time is now. Our government has chosen not to appeal the court's decision. We decided instead to repeal the outdated Theatres Act and replace it with a modern and responsive legislative framework that meets the needs of Ontario citizens in the 21st century.

J'aimerais prendre un moment pour présenter aux députés ici les réformes importantes que contient le projet de loi.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): You're lucky Margaret Marland isn't here for this, Jim.

Hon Mr Watson: The honourable member for Nepean-Carleton is quite interested in this. I understand that he and his caucus were in a film on October 2. It was called Honey, I Shrunk the Caucus. So I know he has a great interest in this.

Il importe de noter que la Loi sur les cinémas n'a jamais été mise à jour au complet dans 40 ans.

The current legislation is actually a patchwork of amendments containing, among other things, obsolete provisions, archaic language and enforcement standards that are generally at odds with modern statutes. Some 40 years ago, the pictures, as they were quaintly called, bore no resemblance to the films of today. Reforms are therefore needed to modernize classification standards to better protect consumers; respond to emerging media technologies; improve enforcement and more efficiently use enforcement resources; streamline licensing requirements, reducing costs for businesses and improving government efficiency; and facilitate harmonization of classification standards across Canada.

This new legislative framework reflects changes in the market, changes in technology and new approaches to government service delivery. This new legislation redefines the term "film" to include emerging media. Administratively, the reforms will create greater fairness and transparency.

The new act will harmonize key components like licensing and enforcement with other Ontario statutes and the film legislation of other provinces. The reforms will enable the government to streamline and improve service delivery by allowing us to enter into service delivery partnerships with other jurisdictions and governing bodies.

La modernisation de cette loi fait suite aux nombreux commentaires reçus des parents, des consommateurs ainsi que des entreprises de distribution de films et de production de jeux vidéo.

This legislation, in summary, if approved by honourable members in this chamber, will modernize Ontario's film classification system.

SECURITY INDUSTRY

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The McGuinty government believes that Ontario residents must be protected and that those offering that protection in any capacity must be properly licensed, trained, and clearly identifiable.

It's my privilege to introduce today a bill that will help make Ontarians safer. The proposed Private Security and Investigative Services Act, 2004, represents the first significant legislative changes regulating the security industry since the introduction of the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act in 1966. These changes are necessary to better protect Ontarians and reflect the role and growing numbers of security personnel in our society. There were 4,000 licensed security personnel in 1966, and that number is now at nearly 30,000. That's an increase of 725%.

If passed, the new act would create a more professional industry and improve community safety.

The proposed legislative changes would address the key issue of mandatory licensing, which means removing many current exemptions from the act. Approximately 20,000 individuals providing security services in Ontario

are currently exempt from the act. If the Private Security and Investigative Services Act is passed, personnel whose main duties involve protecting people and property would have to be licensed.

The proposed legislation would also call for training standards that would have to be met prior to an applicant obtaining a licence. There would be made-in-Ontario training criteria, including use of force, first aid, and diversity sensitivity, which would be developed in collaboration with our shareholders. It is our intention to make this training as accessible as possible across Ontario and available from as many providers as possible.

If passed, the new act would also better reflect the nature of the work in the industry. We would make a licence portable and allow security personnel to change employers without having to reapply for a licence. There are approximately 50,000 new licence applications or renewal applications to the ministry every year, and only about 30,000 licence holders. The difference in the number of licensed personnel and the number of applications reflects the high turnover rate in this industry.

We will continue to work with our partners to address another key issue in the proposed legislation. Together, we will draft regulations for new standards for uniforms, equipment and vehicles used by security personnel.

We have worked with our partners to develop the new act, and we will continue to do so during its implementation.

I'd like to acknowledge the co-operation of the Association of Professional Security Agencies and the Council of Private Investigators of Ontario in working with us to reform the security industry. The association and the council have played a very useful role, and we hope to continue to build on this fruitful relationship and on our relationship with other stakeholders, such as the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

I would also like to recognize the valuable work of members in this House for contributing to this legislation, starting with the honourable member for Brant, David Levac, in the area of identification standards; the honourable member for York West, Mario Sergio, for advocating mandatory licensing; and the honourable member for Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, for his proposals on civilian oversight and facilitators.

There would be a two-year phase-in period to allow for consultations on proposed regulations, standardized tests, providers of the training and testing to be identified, and for the industry to adapt to the new legislation.

1420

We have already established a strong partnership with our stakeholders. In 2003, the ministry sent a discussion paper on the proposed changes to the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act to 600 stakeholders. Seventy-three written responses by individuals, associations and agencies were submitted to the ministry. We will continue to work with our partners to develop supporting regulations and to implement the new act over the next two years.

The new act also comes less than a year after the coroner's inquest into the death of Patrick Shand. Mr Shand was a Toronto man who died after an altercation with employees of a grocery store and security guards. I'm delighted that Mrs Ethel Shand, Patrick's mother, is in the members' east gallery. I would like to acknowledge that she is here.

Earlier this year, the coroner's jury made 22 recommendations on training, licensing and standards for security guards. The new act responds substantively to the recommendations and would, if passed, strengthen the level of training and professionalism of security personnel.

The new act is one more way we are working with our partners to deliver real, positive change that will make Ontario strong, healthy and prosperous. Ontario is already a safe province, but we can make it even safer. The Private Security and Investigative Services Act would help us achieve that goal.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

FILM CLASSIFICATION

CLASSEMENT DES FILMS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

I am responding to the statement by the consumer minister, also known as the minister responsible for trivial distractions. This week he is attempting to distract attention from the fact that they are breaking their most important promise with respect to tax increases they promised they would not impose on the people of Ontario.

We heard the minister reference the member from Nepean-Carleton starring in a movie. I think he may have starred in the movie *Honey, I Swelled My Head*, and that might apply to many of his colleagues. We see it on a day-to-day basis in this place. They talk about things like democratic reform. Well, our critic couldn't be here today to respond to this because there was no notification. We had this dropped on our desks as we came into the House. That is the way they approach democratic reform: Ignore all of the members sitting in the opposition benches. That's a tradition on the front benches of the Liberal government.

We will take a close look at this. We'll give it careful consideration.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I would like to hear the leader of the official opposition respond. I think there was much more quiet when the statements were being made. Could you give him the same courtesy, please.

Mr Runciman: That's another indication of their interest in democracy: shouting down the opposition with their opportunity to respond.

SECURITY INDUSTRY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to respond to the introduction of this new legislation, which I would like to call a weak cousin of Bill 88, my private member's bill.

Patrick Shand died of injuries received during an altercation with store employees and security guards outside a Scarborough grocery store on September 14, 1999. On April 23, 2004, the coroner's inquest into the death of Mr Shand came up with 22 recommendations dealing with a broad range of issues, such as training and use of force.

On June 1, 2004, I introduced Bill 88, the Private Investigators and Security Guards Amendment Act, 2004. Three days later, Bill 88 passed second reading in the Ontario Legislature. Minister Kwinter supported that legislation.

I thought I would point out a few of the changes to the private security industry that would have been brought about under Bill 88 before the regulations process: mandatory, multi-level training and standards for use of force, firearms and making arrests; different classes and portability of licences; one-year term on all licences; restrictions on the equipment that licensees are authorized to use or are prohibited from using; prohibitions for licensees on uniforms, and markings and colours of security vehicles that resemble those of police officers; prohibitions on licensees on the use of badges or other insignia that resemble those of police officers; record-keeping of the use of force that is required to be reported annually.

We looked at the Shand inquiry very seriously and spent a lot of time with that, including the Police Association of Ontario, which helped us with the bill. I even included a section that protected people with disabilities. Where possible, my bill addressed each and every one of the Shand inquiry recommendations. Based on what I've seen so far about the legislation introduced today—and I've only seen the compendium—I'm concerned that Minister Kwinter's bill doesn't go far enough to immediately address the 22 recommendations of the Shand inquest. Too many of the most important recommendations from the inquest—for example, the use of force and mandatory training—have been left up to regulations for implementation at a later date, if at all.

In today's bill, it seems that those requirements on training and use of force are not specified. In fact, all I see that's specific in the compendium is a lot about who, what, when and how to get a licence but nothing specific about what happens after the licence is issued. The minister appears to have run out of steam after the licensing components of the bill and bumped everything else into regulations that he may prescribe, if at all.

I was quite amazed to learn that the McGuinty government will consult again on the new legislation when the

Shand inquest recommended that the government act quickly, since the issues are already well known by the ministry.

I introduced this bill in early June. Six months have passed. In the spirit of democratic renewal, this bill could have been passed by now. It's a very tough bill, not the weak sister I see actually happening here today. I'm disappointed in that we've taken this long to come up with a piece of legislation that is going to rely so much on regulations.

The other thing that's important is that we talk about more consultation. Two weeks ago, when the Police Association of Ontario was here, all of a sudden option 4 was brought out without any consultation with the chiefs of police of Ontario. That's the type of move this minister is making. I'm disappointed, and at this point I will not be supporting this piece of legislation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats support and urge full compliance and implementation of all the recommendations made in the Shand inquest by the group of people who assessed all the facts and made a thorough list of important recommendations.

What's of concern is that the Shand inquest said that while it's important that all stakeholders be consulted, the ministry has had many years to consult and the time for action is now. There's no time for protracted development of regulations; I'm concerned that the minister has already indicated that some of those regulations may not be available until 2007.

It's of concern that while the government says it has consulted, it has failed to consult with the largest single group of organized security guards, those members of the United Steelworkers of America. I urge the minister, in the course of the development of this legislation and its process through this Legislature, to meaningfully speak with security guards themselves and, as importantly, those trade unions which represent those security guards, the largest single representative, of course, being the United Steelworkers of America.

Quite frankly, the key to reforming this industry is reforming labour relations. It is imperative that security guards have successor rights. As well, Minister, you know that security guards are among the lowest-paid workers in this province. If we're going to create a climate and a standard for security guards which compels them to be more thoroughly and adequately trained and to engage in constant and ongoing retraining, we have to ensure that these workers receive wages that are commensurate with the skills they're expected to have and exercise in the course of performing their duties. We can't have security guards relegated to a low-wage, poverty ghetto and then call upon them to undergo the training and meet the standards that all of us will insist be established in your legislation and the accompanying regulations.

We agree that the issue of uniforms and the appearance of security guards is very important. I take note of your observation that since 1966 we've had a 725% increase in the number of security guards; we now have 30,000-plus here in Ontario. Understand what that really means. It means that more and more communities across this province are relying on privatized policing rather than being able to have confidence in our publicly funded, publicly supervised police forces. Get more police officers out on the street. Assist communities across this province, big city through small town, in meeting minimum standards for staffing, training and resourcing their own publicly paid and publicly supervised police officers, and we won't encounter some of the obvious difficulties we do with private policing services that have their guards masquerade as police officers in cars with red lights and in uniforms that are designed to be facsimiles of police officers' uniforms.

FILM CLASSIFICATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to say to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services: It's about time; you've known since April 30, 2004, that you only had 12 months in which to respond to the Superior Court of Ontario. You didn't choose not to appeal the decision; your lawyers read the judgment and saw that it was thoroughly compelling and wasn't worthy of an appeal and the expenditure of any more taxpayers' dollars. So I say to you, here you come, a week before this House is to recess for the Christmas break, not to come back until February 15 through to March 9, and you've only got till April 30 of next year to pass this legislation. What have you been doing since April 30?

I say to you, under your new regime of classification, how would the movie *Pinocchio* be rated? I'm urged to request of you, by colleagues sitting around me, how that movie with the great Canadian actor Jim Carrey, *Liar Liar*, would be rated by the Liberals' new regulatory scheme vis-à-vis film in Ontario.

Pinocchio, Liar Liar—I don't know. Get on with the job. You should have been on to it already.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to put it on the record that Mr Kwinter used my name in his speech. I want to make it clear that I asked Mr Kwinter not to use my name in that speech.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

DEFERRED VOTES

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK
AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(HEURES DE TRAVAIL ET AUTRES
QUESTIONS)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1432 to 1437.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Fonseca, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldeep	Sergio, Mario
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Cordiano, Joseph	Marsales, Judy	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hampton, Howard	Murdoch, Bill
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 24.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill be now passed and be entitled as in the motion.

PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED TO DOGS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ
PUBLIQUE RELATIVE AUX CHIENS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 132, An Act to Amend the Dog Owners Liability Act to increase public safety in relation to dogs, including pit bulls, and to make related amendments to the Animals for Research Act / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens pour accroître la sécurité publique relativement aux chiens, y compris les pit-bulls, et apportant des modifications connexes à la Loi sur les animaux destinés à la recherche.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1441 to 1446.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fonseca, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldeep	Sergio, Mario
Bryant, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Levac, Dave	Van Bommel, Maria
Cordiano, Joseph	Marsales, Judy	Watson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill
Baird, John R.	Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53 and the nays are 24.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed

VISITORS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Legislature a very special guest: Her Worship Mayor Lynn Peterson, mayor of the city of Thunder Bay.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I too would like to offer a very, very warm welcome to the mayor of the greater city of Sudbury, David Courtemanche.

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I do not have a mayor to introduce, but I do have—I could say she probably is the mayor of Long Sioux, the community where I live—my mother, and my wife here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Health, and the question concerns the important crisis that exists in Ontario hospitals.

The Peterborough Regional Health Centre is about to be put on fiscal life support. Your order for the hospital to cut spending by at least \$8 million will have real and immediate consequences to patients in Peterborough and the surrounding area.

Minister, it's not rocket science. A hospital that is already overloaded cannot lay off 124 nurses and health care workers, close 32 beds and reduce health care in 10 areas, yet provide the same level of service. It has the busiest emergency ward in the province. In recent months, 129 patients have had their scheduled surgeries cancelled, which had a devastating effect on them and their families.

The day-to-day reality of hospital care in Peterborough gives the lie to the claim that a higher level of care or even the same, inadequate level is possible with fewer resources. Minister, will you stand in your place and will you back off this attempt to squeeze \$8 million from patient care in Peterborough?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think it's important to remind the honourable member that the biggest news and the biggest thing coming in the community of Peterborough is that the honourable member for that riding, who is a very, very strong advocate on its behalf, has made considerable progress toward the new hospital facility long overdue in that community.

We do acknowledge, further, that our government has invested more than \$16 million in the community of Peterborough for a variety of community health services, all of which are designed, frankly, to address one present reality in Peterborough which is the legacy of that party while in government: Their inability to have primary care

that works in communities has meant that Peterborough is a community with challenges.

With respect to the hospital budget, let me be very clear to the honourable member. We have a process, we're at the beginning stages of it, and he wants to bring forward those things that may have been proposed, but I do remind him we are not at a point in the process where any cut that he may talk about has been accepted.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): These are uneasy times, Minister, for health care. Whether it's doctors or hospitals, they are concerned.

I wrote to you and gave you some information on an article I picked up in Peterborough, drawing to your attention, "Peterborough Regional Health Centre in Dire Straits."

Today I read the paper and here I've got Wendy Fucile, vice-president of nursing services, referring to cuts to postpartum clinics, breastfeeding clinics, cervical cancer and other programs. She says these are painful decisions.

Minister, it's clear. I sent you a letter on October 25. You still have not responded to the question with respect to the Peterborough Regional Health Centre capital project.

Today, I'm asking you if you can just, for the record and for the people of Ontario, stand in your place and make it clear that the status of the Peterborough Regional Health Centre will be committed, as Tony Clement committed in 2003.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member raises the legacy of Tony Clement and the issue of hospital capital, and this stands as one more piece of rather firm evidence of the irresponsibility of your party while in government.

What we have inherited is a party that ran amok all across the province of Ontario, in one venue after the next, presenting plastic cheques, which turned out to be rubber cheques.

The reality is very clear. I say on the issue of capital, if you'd listened to my first answer, what you would have heard very clearly from me. Something that I presented to the mayor directly, something that I've spoken to the hospital CEO about very directly, is that this government stands behind the commitment to enhance health services in the Peterborough community through the construction of a new hospital facility.

Mr Baird: Minister, we want more than commitments; we want more than words. We want those funds to flow to Peterborough so that they can begin construction of this new health care facility.

We're marking an anniversary today. One year ago this week, you stood in your place and promised that that hospital expansion would proceed on schedule and on time. Since that time, not a single approval has been granted and not a single dollar has flowed.

This is starting to have real consequences for people in Peterborough. The community has raised its share of the money. The county has come to the table to raise its

share of the money, and the city of Peterborough is delivering on its commitment. The only person who is backing out from his responsibility and his commitment is you, Minister. Will you stand in your place and will you now commit that you will immediately flow the money and allow the expansion of the new hospital in Peterborough to be built, just as you promised to do 12 months ago? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: It has gotten very easy for the honourable member to stand in his place now and pretend he wasn't part of a party that, while in government, ran all across the province of Ontario promising facilities for which there was no money left in the cookie jar. There was none.

Mr Baird: You promised a year ago.

The Speaker: Order, member from Nepean-Carleton. Please come to order. I intend to name some folks today.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Be careful with the incentives, Speaker.

Notwithstanding all of that, what I want to say to the honourable member, which I've said in the presence of that honourable member and I've gone to the Peterborough community and said, as has our Premier, is that this is a project which we support and will move forward on.

I really suggest to the honourable member that you do just a little bit of research. You've said that they've raised their local share, but the reality of the Peterborough build is that a significant portion of the local share is expected to be financed through operational savings, and this means we have some hard work to do to make sure the budget of the hospital in Peterborough is in balance, because the legacy of your party while in government is not one that stands up very well to the test of the people of Ontario.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Transportation: Yesterday, Christina Blizzard in the Toronto Sun confirmed that the government and its hired public relations company, Edelman, have translated and distributed press releases regarding their disputes with the 407 ETR in Spain. Ms Blizzard refers specifically to one such particularly inflammatory document circulated to Spanish journalists.

I have shared that document with you to share with your staff several days ago. Your spokesperson, Danna O'Brien, said it was not sent out by the ministry or by Edelman. Will you confirm Ms O'Brien's statement? Minister, what role did your ministry or Edelman play with that inflammatory document?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me just say this: All the documents we release with regard to 407 are public information. They are available on the Internet, which means they are available internationally.

I am not going to stand here and apologize for fighting for the rights of Ontarians. We are fighting for the rights

of the people. I also want to make it very clear that we are not against the company. We are defending our rights that are available to us under the terms of the contract, and we will continue to do so.

Mr Hudak: Your staff member Ms O'Brien said that neither you nor Edelman had anything to do with that particular document. You seem to be saying the exact same thing in your answer to my first question.

Minister, I'm going to send you a document that was e-mailed to Spanish journalists by an employee from Edelman in Madrid—to the minister. In this e-mail, the Edelman employee refers to this backgrounder I sent you and attached a copy to it. He also suggests that interested journalists contact directly your press secretary, Danna O'Brien.

Minister, you refuse to deny that you had no role in this, but this document says otherwise. Minister, come clean. Don't try to cover this up. What role are your ministry and Edelman playing with this inflammatory document?

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Hon Mr Takhar: I thought what I said was that any documents we release are public information. They are available on the Internet. We are going to stand up for the rights of consumers and drivers and we are going to protect all the rights that are available to us under the terms of the contract that you signed and more or less said that you're going to give a 2% increase, and that was not true to start with.

Mr Hudak: The minister continues to engage in this cover-up that neither his ministry nor their hired public relations firm, Edelman, had anything to do with this document. Minister, you're going to have to answer this question: Exactly what role did your ministry or your hired gun, Edelman, play in this?

Let me give you one more piece of information. When you look at the electronic document and you check the properties of that electronic document, it was written by Kevin Powers, an employee of Edelman in the city of Toronto. Ms O'Brien, your spokesperson, said one thing, you're backing her up, and the facts say just the opposite. Come clean.

Hon Mr Takhar: I want to make it clear again that what we're doing with the 407 is protecting the rights of Ontarians. The previous government failed to do that. Not only did they fail to do that, but they also did not really provide the right information about the contract they signed, which didn't protect consumers at all. Our information is very transparent. We will continue to do so. I want to say again, it has nothing to do with the company; it has to do with the contract.

WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. On Monday I asked you about your failure to address a serious overcrowding problem at the cramped Women's College neonatal intensive care unit and about how your failure

contributed to 10 very fragile babies becoming very ill. You offered this excuse: Sunnybrook and Women's College "does not have the fiscal wherewithal to raise their local share of the project."

Today, the chair of the hospital foundation's board of directors said your claims are "absolutely without foundation."

Minister, were you misinformed by Liberal research on this issue or did you get it wrong all by yourself?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think if the honourable member had taken a little bit of time to read four or five sentences down in the piece, he would have seen another quote from the same gentleman. Here's what the quote said: "We've studied this, spoken to banks about financing. We know that this is within our reach."

Is it the position of the New Democratic Party of Ontario, with respect to the future of hospital development, that if a local community does not have the capacity to raise its local share, they should finance that on the back of their ongoing operating budget? That is the position that hospital is taking.

Mr Hampton: We did some research. We called them up. This is their position: They have \$30 million in the bank now, they have a further \$5 million that they have already fundraised and they're waiting for the Minister of Health to announce the approval of the project and your money so they can go out there and do the other fundraising. That's how it's done, Minister. Once you have approval for the project, it's very easy to raise the money. If you don't have approval for the project, it's very difficult to go to people and say, "We need your help."

So, yes, he said that they thought through this; they've been to the bank; they can get short-term financing; they can do the other fundraising. My question to you is, when will you quit stalling? Announce that you're approving the project and put the Ministry of Health's money in.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Notwithstanding the attempts by the honourable member to confuse the situation, I want to say that this is a hospital, in all of its sites, that provides exemplary care in the province of Ontario, and our underlying commitment remains with the patients who seek service in these centres.

The reality of this capital project is a challenging one on a number of fronts. It's a \$300-million redevelopment. Notwithstanding the honourable member's view that all you've got to do is say, "Go ahead," and all the money will flow, the reality is that the hospital—and I have met with George Fierheller, who is the chair of the fundraising campaign—is not certain of their capacity to be able to raise all of the necessary funds. They have suggested that, in the alternative, they would seek to pay for hospital capital from their base budget, those operating dollars. We all know that's a very precarious situation. What we're interested in is being able to secure at the earliest opportunity, on behalf of those patients that you spoke of, the necessary capital environment. That's what we will do.

Mr Hampton: Here's what they say: "We've studied this. We've spoken to the banks about financing. We know that this is within our reach." Are you denying that they have \$30 million in the bank? Are you denying that they fundraised over \$5 million already? Are you saying that the second-largest hospital in the city of Toronto, possibly the second-largest in the province, can't go out and fundraise once you make the announcement?

I'll tell you what's happening here: You want to hold up this project, and so you're looking for any excuse whatsoever to hold it up.

Announce that you approve this project, announce that you're putting the money in, and this hospital and this group of people will be able to raise their final share. Will you do that, or are you going to continue to stall?

Hon Mr Smitherman: In point of fact, we're not going to stall at all. What we're conducting is an expedited review to make sure that we move forward as fast as possible to provide an enhanced level of care for those patients, because the very project that you wish me to give the go-ahead on today will not be constructed until 2008. The local share for this project is \$138 million. This does demonstrate a very significant gap.

Coming from an honourable member who was part of a government that didn't build one stitch of hospital in a period of time, it comes as no surprise whatsoever that the honourable member is a proponent of funding hospital capital from the ongoing operating of that facility. I'm not convinced that that is in the best interests of the patients of the province of Ontario.

With respect to these young patients in the NICU at Women's College Hospital, we are going to make sure, on an expedited basis, that we make a decision that gets them the enhanced level of care that we all seek, and we're doing that fast.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, your government is blowing a chance to have Bombardier build the new C series jet assembly plant here in Ontario. It means 2,500 direct jobs in assembly; it means thousands more jobs in spinoffs. It means over \$250 billion of economic activity for Ontario over the next 20 years.

Yesterday, the Quebec government sent a very clear signal to Bombardier to build the assembly plant there. They announced \$750 million in loan guarantees. The question is, what is your government's plan? We haven't seen one so far.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I can appreciate the honourable member's interest in this matter, but we're not about to enter into negotiations by means of this question period framework.

I can tell you this: We are pursuing this opportunity most aggressively. I can say we're building on a very strong foundation. In fact, I am pleased to report that in our first year, this government has created almost more

than three times as many jobs as the Tory government did in its first year: from June 1995 to June 1996, 40,700; in our first year, over 116,000 jobs. We consider that a very good opening track record, and that's the approach we will bring to dealing with this opportunity and so many others.

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Mr Hampton: The Quebec government is very public about what they're prepared to do. The British government is very public about what they're prepared to do to have this assembly plant in Belfast, Ireland. American states are very public about what they're prepared to do. What do we hear from you and your minister? Nothing. No plan. No strategy.

This is the opportunity to relaunch Ontario's aerospace industry. It looks as if you've completely thrown in the towel. It looks as if you don't have a strategy so you make something up every day that I ask this question. What's your government's plan? What's your strategy? When are you going to announce it?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Let's be clear about what the Quebec government has announced, because I know the leader of the third party likes to twist things around. The Quebec government's announcement was with respect to equity financing that is not related to the C series; it's related to RJ production in Quebec.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Cordiano: Well, it's not the C series. You claim that we're not involved, not engaged in negotiations with Bombardier, which is completely false. We are in fact doing that, and let me also indicate to the leader of the third party that we're in discussions with the industry minister for Canada. I've also spoken to my counterpart in Quebec. And guess what? We're doing things a little differently. We're approaching this matter with a Canadian strategy in mind. Unlike the way you've done things in the past, we are going to approach this from a Canadian standpoint, working together, just as the Premier demonstrated—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mr Hampton: Once again, the McGuinty government is clear as mud. It's pretty clear you don't have a strategy. There are 2,500 direct assembly line jobs; there are thousands more supplier jobs. The workers in this industry heard your Premier last year in the election when he said, "We will support our key business clusters with smart investments." Now they want to see some action. Bombardier isn't asking for a subsidy. What they want is investment. What they want is either a co-investment strategy, a loan guarantee strategy or some kind of down-the-road sharing so that they can locate this here. What is the McGuinty government's plan? Do you have a plan? Please announce it.

Hon Mr Cordiano: I'm not going to take a lecture from a member who dismisses CAW workers completely, who has done so in the past and who has never

demonstrated an interest in their views. We take no lectures from the leader of the third party.

It's very clear—in fact, this was debated in the Quebec Legislature. This is what the leader of the opposition had to say. He accused the Premier of Quebec and said that Ontario was trying to steal Quebec's aerospace industry. That's what he was accusing the Premier of Quebec of doing.

Ontario is engaged. We are engaged. We have an aerospace strategy. It includes the federal government and also includes, for your information, the government of Quebec. We are working together. For the first time, that's happening across this country. You would have us deal with things in the status quo fashion. We're moving away from that. We will secure aerospace work for our workers in Ontario.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is for the Premier. You should know that when condominiums were built by the Intrawest Corp at Blue Mountain in the Town of the Blue Mountains, they were inadvertently put in the commercial classification for the purposes of property taxes. That means that taxes have been going through the roof. Mr Jim Peterson, who writes me regularly on this issue, notes that his taxes have gone up 260% because his condominium has been classified as commercial property.

I didn't want to bring this up in question period, but I've written several times to your Minister of Finance. I've had phone conversations with Peter Wilkinson, his chief of staff. I've met with the Deputy Minister of Finance about this issue. All have promised, on behalf of your government, that they would correct this mistake that was made in the past.

You've had 14 months to correct the mistake. Condominium owners can't wait any longer. When are you going to live up to your promise and help the condominium owners and the Town of the Blue Mountains?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): My understanding is that the challenge faced by this particular constituent is the result of a regulation passed by the then government. It is not unusual for us to be saddled with the responsibility of cleaning up messes left by the previous government.

I can say to the member opposite that if he provides me with details, I will undertake to get back to him on this.

Mr Wilson: Details—I would think you'd read, and you'd care, about Collingwood in your regional clippings. It's in the paper all the time. It's the huge issue up there.

Another constituent, Donnie Bond, has seen his tax bill exceed \$7,000 per year. Some of these condominiums are, at the largest, 1,100 square feet. It's ridiculous.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence, please.

Mr Wilson: So I ask you on a friendly—for me, anyway—non-partisan basis to get to the bottom of this. Yes, it's a mistake that was made. We admit the mistake. I've admitted it in every media report when I've been asked. That's not the point. The point is that you've had 14 months. You've made a promise through three different senior people in your government, including your Minister of Finance, and nothing is being done about it. I shouldn't have to send you any paper. This should have already been to cabinet and been solved.

When are you going to live up to your promise? Here's one promise that you can keep that doesn't cost you anything, and everybody agrees it needs to be done.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm not familiar with any particular commitment to be found in our platform with respect to cleaning up this particular mess created by the previous government. It's delicious to watch the member now lobby us to clean up a mess that his government created.

I have given my word that we will look into the matter. He has brought this to my attention. I give him my assurance that I will look into this.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Minister of Transportation implied to this House that his backgrounder was on his Web site. The minister has misled the House.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Everyone is jumping up at the same time on a point of order. Did you put a point of order? I didn't hear it.

Mr Hudak: The Minister of Transportation, in response, implied that this document was on his Web site; it is not. The minister has misled—

The Speaker: Order. Member from Erie-Lincoln, you have used some very unparliamentary words. I'd like you to withdraw them.

Mr Hudak: I'm sorry, Speaker.

The Speaker: You have said something very unparliamentary. I'd like you to withdraw it.

Mr Hudak: Mr Speaker, with all due respect, as to the Minister of Transportation—

The Speaker: Order. I presume you're refusing to withdraw.

Mr Hudak: I believe the minister is continuing to mislead—

The Speaker: If you refuse, I have no alternative but to name the member.

Mr Hudak was escorted from the chamber.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. This is a good news/bad news story. First of all, the good news: A mother of six is on a Scarborough street and finds \$40,000 lying there in \$20 bills—cash on the street. What does she do? She does the right thing: She takes the money into the nearby bank, and a few days later, her

honesty and integrity rewards her with a \$2,000 reward and a Christmas gift package for her children.

Then, the bad news and the twist: Mrs Peliti is on social assistance. Mrs Peliti knows that gifts like this are usually clawed back because of punitive regulations that your government continues to enforce.

1520

Minister, Mrs Peliti is here with her two sons today in the visitors' gallery and she wants to hear directly from you. She wants to hear, and all Ontario wants to hear, can this honest woman keep her money or is your government going to—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I think the applause is for the honourable thing the lady has done, not the question. Is the question to the Minister of Community and Social Services?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): What I am really pleased about is to see Mrs Peliti here in the House. Let me say very directly, it's Christmastime, and there has never been such a great story on the news as watching a very honest person take that money and bring it right into the bank. We are proud of you; we really are. We thought that was just super. It's great to have you here in the House to see how some of our legislation works. Let me tell you this: The government has absolutely no intention of clawing back that funding that is considered a reward for her tribute to honesty.

I doubt you'll give me another chance for a supplementary after that, so let me get this in right now: I will tell you that under a Liberal government, that is the way we think. We think that our social assistance system has to help people, that it has to treat people with dignity, and that is a sincere change from where we were a year ago.

The Speaker: And in the supplementary, you can get that in.

Mr Prue: I thank you for the first part; now for the second. I want to hear the real change, because Deb Peliti and her kids and 660,000 Ontarians rely on social assistance. Every single month, Deb Peliti has \$227 clawed back from her meagre cheque by your government. Your own parliamentary assistant said in her report last week that "workfare fails families." However, on page 18 of the same report, she says "... movement toward the elimination of the clawback of the national child benefit supplement." She only wants you to move toward it. Before the election, Dalton McGuinty said, "The clawback is wrong and we will end it." Deb Peliti wants the \$227, not in 20 years but now. Will you be as honest as she is and allow her to keep her money that you promised during the election she would get?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I know that what Mrs Peliti will be thrilled to hear is that since we became the government, \$7 million has been returned to families. Unlike the last government, which never once looked at their social policies to see the effects on families, this government made that a priority from the moment we took office.

What we did immediately was eliminate the lifetime ban for fraud convictions on welfare. What we did was, for the first time in 12 years, an increase in social assistance to help families. What we did was a 3% increase to our agencies that help families.

HEALTH CARE

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): My question is for the Minister of Health. Ernie Eves once said that people should be able to buy their way to the front of the health care line. Two-tier Tony Clement continually floated the idea of a pay-as-you-go health care system. As recently as the last PC leadership debate, Frank Klees based his entire campaign on two-tier health care. Like the rest of the Conservatives who turned their back on public health care, yesterday in an article John Tory wrote in the *National Post*, the new leader of the Conservative Party repeated his call for more privatization of health care, a position consistently rejected by the people of Ontario. It was a Conservative privatization agenda of the last eight years that left us with closed hospitals and fewer nurses per capita than any other province, and nine out of 10 provinces in family doctors per capita. In contrast to the Conservative leader, the McGuinty government is committed to public health care. What steps are we taking to ensure that Ontario's health care system remains in public hands and to stop the privatization—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Minister.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think it's interesting to note that first John Tory wants to cut \$2 billion out of health care and now he's a proponent, in the tradition of his party, for its privatization. It was interesting that during the question the honourable member from Oak Ridges was campaigning and yelling out words like "choice," demonstrating the extent to which in the front benches of that opposition party lives the idea that, if we simply privatize our services and allow those with more money to go to the front of the line, all things will be better.

Instead, our government's approach is clear: We don't listen to the Fraser Institute; we listen to people like Roy Romanow and we move forward with meaningful reform, like the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which brings in strict prohibitions on queue-jumping and pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line services. We're a government that's dedicated to the view that medicare is the best expression of Canadian values. We're working hard to inform Ontarians and to build on the capacities of our public health care system. We don't think privatization is the solution that John Tory and his friends opposite do.

Ms Matthews: When I talk to people at the grocery store, in my constituency office or on their doorstep, they tell me they want a public health system to keep them healthy and to take care of them when they get sick.

In yesterday's article, Tory targeted MRIs. He is calling for private MRI clinics. He is clearly out of touch.

If he talked to the people in my riding of London North Centre, he would know they do not want increased privatization of health care; what they want is good, reliable public health care.

Minister, can you assure the constituents of my riding that we are done with the days of accessing MRIs with a credit card, that we say what we mean and mean what we say when we talk about public health services for everyone?

Hon Mr Smitherman: We're a government that has made serious movement on our commitments to enhance the access of Ontarians to important services like MRI and CT. While it was the previous government's approach to establish private clinics that did not offer the protection against pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care, we have moved forward with a bill that I mentioned earlier, and with a repatriation to the public domain of private MRI services that they brought forward. But way more important than that, we're a government that's moving forward to enhance the capacity of Ontarians to access these important services. Over the course of 18 months, we'll see an incredible 20% increase—a 20% increase in 18 months—in access to MRI and CT scan services in Ontario.

That is the evidence that the people of Ontario need. They need to know, and they see from their government, that we're committed to medicare, not pay-your-way-to-the-front-of-the-line health care, as proposed by John Tory.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I presume the member from Durham is going to quieten down now.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I've heard you answer questions on several occasions in this House about the double-hatter fire issue. I know you're going to get up and try to deflect the blame for this year's issue and tell me that our government should have moved forward on it. Well, I agree with you, and on some other things. Ask the Minister of the Environment; she has a few problems too.

Mr Minister, you are the government now. You guys are the government. Do you realize that maybe we're over here because we didn't move on some of these issues? You're over there, and it's time you started making some decisions, and I've got one for you to start with.

The chief of the Mildmay-Carrick volunteer fire department was recently forced to resign because he was deemed to be a double-hatter firefighter. This man was the chief for over eight years, and did a tremendous job protecting the safety of the people in my riding. Mr Minister, do you think that the forced resignation of this fire chief makes my riding a safer place to live in?

1530

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): Just for the record,

this is the 10th time the official opposition has asked me a question about double-hatters, and the answers are basically the same: Community safety is our number one priority. Second, we appreciate volunteerism. On the other hand, we have the fire marshal who is keeping a very close eye on this situation. At the present time he has not seen fit to declare that there is a safety concern he has to address—he is watching it. Until that time, we maintain that the way this can be resolved is through the collective bargaining process.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member from Waterloo-Wellington.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Unfortunately, the minister did not answer my colleague's question, so I guess I will. No, your riding is not safer with the loss of the Mildmay-Carrick fire chief. In fact, it is less safe, because his valuable training, leadership and experience have been taken away from those communities, all because of an aggressive union's membership drive and the unwillingness of the current government to lift a finger to protect these rural communities.

The minister just said that the double-hatter issue should be resolved through collective bargaining, and yet he knows full well that this is impossible—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. I'd like the member to withdraw that comment. It was unparliamentary.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I withdraw.

Mr Arnott: He knows this is impossible, because the rural communities which are losing the double-hatters have no seat at the table when a city and its professional firefighters sit down to negotiate. If the government continues to look the other way while our rural departments lose their key people, those communities become less and less safe in the event of an emergency.

My question is this: Is it going to take a tragedy involving the avoidable loss of human life before this government takes action on this vital public safety issue?

Hon Mr Kwinter: I appreciate the member's question. I know how he feels about this. I know that he introduced a private member's bill. I think it's interesting to relate for members of the House who weren't here at that time that the members who are currently in that caucus who didn't even show up for third reading of this private member's bill are the member for Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop; the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, Ernie Eves; and the member for Whitby-Ajax, Jim Flaherty. Not only that, but of the 57 members of the caucus, only 42% showed up for that vote. So we have a situation where he couldn't even get support from his own caucus for his bill, and now he's asking us to do something his own caucus would not support.

I maintain again that I am concerned about the safety of people who are getting service; I want to make sure that's maintained. I have the utmost faith in the fire marshal, and until he declares that there is an emergency or a safety concern, we are looking at the collective bargaining process to resolve it.

LABOUR UNIONS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): My question is to the Minister of Labour. You propose that there will be automatic certification of a union if they sign up more than 55% of workers at a workplace, but only in construction, and you claim that this is because the construction sector is unique. You say, "The construction sector is characterized by workplaces that change constantly and a workforce that's both very mobile and can change size constantly."

Minister, that's not unique. You've described virtually every workplace in Ontario. Today's workplace is filled with part-time contingent workers, and you're saying that their rights on the job don't matter. Why will you not extend card certification to all workers in this province so that all are equally entitled to join and belong to a union?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): This government is very determined to make sure the rights of the most vulnerable workers in society, including part-time workers, are protected. That's one of the reasons we proposed, and today passed, Bill 63. It's actually shameful that the member and the party opposite opposed it for so long and held it up for so long, because they held up the rights and protections that the most vulnerable workers need.

The amendments we have proposed to the Labour Relations Act are in fact a very significant advance for the working people of this province. They help to restore the balance. The general rights that apply to all include remedial certification, so that we can deal with the worst abuses and the worst cases; and interim reinstatement, so that during the course of an organizing drive, if an employer takes steps that he or she should not be taking and poisons the well, there can be remedial steps by the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

We have, in addition, recognizing the specific character and the special nature of construction, which has its own part of the act, extended card-based certification—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Kormos: Why do you have such disdain and disregard for so many workers here in the province, the most vulnerable workers in the province, the ones who most urgently need a union representing them? You rightly protect workers in the construction trade, but you offer no protection for the thousands upon thousands of workers in low-paying jobs, mainly women, mainly new Canadians, who want a union representing them.

Card-based certification is hardly a radical proposal. It was the law in Ontario for decades under NDP, Liberal and Conservative governments. Minister, show the courage that workers expect of you to restore the law as it existed under Bill Davis. In fact, pass the NDP Bill 151 today and give all workers in Ontario the same right to join a union.

Hon Mr Bentley: The NDP is so strong in defence of worker rights when they're in opposition, but when they were in government, it was the social contract, the gruel, for everybody.

The fact of the matter is, we have worked hard to protect the rights of workers in all spheres in this province, especially the most vulnerable: our employment standards advances, very significant advances, in Bill 63 to ensure that the most vulnerable have their rights protected; raising minimum wage for the first time in nine years; actually enforcing the Employment Standards Act, which they did not do while they were in government—and that was made clear in the auditor's report that came down just the other week, the problems in enforcing the act which the NDP found when they became the government. The act that protects the most vulnerable, they ignored for five years in government, and now they pretend to stand up and defend the most vulnerable. That's shameful conduct. We're doing what they should have done years ago. We actually walk the walk and don't just talk the talk.

PUBLIC INQUIRY

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, during the past decade in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, there have been numerous cries for an independent public inquiry into allegations of abuse in Cornwall and area. Last month, our government committed to fulfilling this community's wishes. Unlike past governments, our government has kept its promise and will lift the cloud—and yes, it is a cloud—that is hanging over this great community.

Minister, as you are aware, the lives of many, many people have been affected and touched by the issues surrounding these allegations. The citizens, the police forces, the public organizations and those who work in the justice system have been touched.

On November 29, you came to my community and brought these groups together in a unique round table. You came to Cornwall to listen to the concerns of these groups and to ensure that they had input into what the terms of reference for this inquiry should entail. Your commitment to getting these terms of reference right and listening to the community is appreciated.

Now that you have met with the community and heard their concerns, can you tell us what the next steps are, and, in particular, can you tell us when you will officially call the inquiry?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Yes, indeed, the people of Cornwall wanted a public inquiry. We said that, as soon as the proceedings before the courts were completed, we would call an inquiry, and, as the Premier confirmed, we will be having a public inquiry that will commence sometime, no doubt, early in the new year.

I say to you, Mr Speaker, this member has been a relentless and tireless champion on this issue, fighting for his constituents, fighting to get the result that they deserve and that they are now finally going to get. We

are having a public inquiry in Cornwall: no ifs, no ands, no buts.

Mr Brownell: The community certainly appreciates your work in recent weeks in coming down to the riding, and your words are encouraging. While a public inquiry is something that my community wants and has called for, I believe it's important that victims are assisted in being able to heal and overcome their suffering. Can you please advise us what you and our government are doing to provide services such as counselling to the victims of abuse in Cornwall?

1540

Hon Mr Bryant: We are committed to ensuring that these victims have the supports and services they need and deserve. The member wants to ensure that we continue to have those supports because inevitably, as the public inquiry unfolds, there's going to be a revisiting of fact and events that are going to require supports for these victims, and this government will be there for those people.

Our ministry funds the Men's Project, which is based in Ottawa but also operates in Cornwall. The Men's Project was set up to provide services to male survivors of sexual assault in the Project Truth investigation. We've been working very closely with the Men's Project to ensure that it effectively meets the needs of its clients and will continue to do so, and we will ensure that the counselling and support services are available to victims throughout the inquiry.

HYDRO PROJECT

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): To the Minister of Health: Minister, over the last number of weeks, two of your cabinet colleagues have refused to respond to my questions that related to the proposed Hydro One high-voltage transmission corridor for York region. The Minister of Education brushed off the concerns of the families whose children attend a school immediately adjacent to the proposed corridor, and the Minister of Energy hides behind an environmental assessment process.

I have in my hand a letter that was sent to you by the mayor of Markham, and he points out that Hydro One says it can't be held accountable for the health impacts of the EMFs caused by high-voltage electrical transmission lines because there are no federal guidelines. He goes on in this letter to urge you not to permit Hydro One to push ahead with its class EA process and filing a final environmental study until the federal government comes back with a renewed position, and he calls on you to initiate a process, together with the federal government, so that the appropriate statistics about EMFs are available. Will you do that, Minister?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): We believe that the environmental assessment process is, in fact, important and does afford

communities the opportunity to respond. I'll remind the member opposite that Hydro One's environmental studies report on this proposal was posted on October 21 for a 60-day public review period, following which Hydro One will decide whether to file the environmental studies report with the Minister of the Environment.

On December 8, 2004, the Hydro One corridor task force conducted additional discussions. I would urge the member to urge his constituents, including Mayor Cousens, whom I've had the opportunity to speak with as well, to work through this process. We believe it's appropriate. We believe it affords the community the opportunities it needs. I remind the member that at the end of the day, the eventual decision, should it come to that, will rest with the board of directors of Hydro One.

Mr Klees: Here is the problem: The minister refers to an environmental process. If we don't have available statistics and appropriate information about the health risks of EMFs available to us, how in the world can the Minister of the Environment or the Minister of Energy or the Minister of Health ever make an appropriate decision about this?

My question was to the Minister of Health. There is a direct appeal to the Minister of Health to initiate, together with the federal government, a study that will in fact confirm the details about the dangers of EMFs to the residents of this area. I will call again on the Minister of Health to stand in his place today and to say that he will, together with the Minister of Health, initiate a study for the federal level of government so that we can have, as the Minister of Energy indicates, the appropriate information that can be assessed during the environmental study. Will the Minister of Health do that?

Hon Mr Duncan: To remind the member, electric and magnetic fields are invisible fields found everywhere electricity is used, from toasters to computers through to major power facilities such as this. This has been studied. There are ample studies available. There has been research done on this matter for close—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Duncan: There have been studies conducted on this for more than 25 years. Research does continue. Health Canada has assessed these studies, all of them, and concluded that typical exposures present no known health risks. That being said, the environmental process that's set up does afford the opportunity to discuss these issues. It does afford the opportunity to look at these studies again. We believe that it is important that this process continue, so that the residents of Markham have an opportunity to be heard on this issue. The posting remains until December 21.

GRAPE AND WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Tourism and Recreation: Minister, agri-tourism has become an increasingly important part of Niagara's economy. During the recent greenbelt consultations, the

government heard from farmer after farmer about the crisis in farm viability, and often cited are the inane provisions of the Wine Content Act.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: No, the Minister of Tourism.

This is legislation that allows 70% of juice in a so-called bottle of Ontario wine to be juices from outside Ontario, from places like Chile or the United States. Minister, when is your government going to amend the Wine Content Act so that it no longer discriminates against Ontario grape growers, Niagara grape growers and wineries, while supporting vineyards and wineries in Chile and the United States?

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): As the member would recall, once having been, I think, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations a number of years ago—I believe at the time that would have been under his jurisdiction. Subsequent to that, it has remained under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations or, as it is now known, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

I would be happy to share the views that have been expressed, not only by the member, who I know has been concerned about this for some period of time, but also by other members of the House. Each time this matter has come before members of three different governments in terms of political stripe, and probably five or six different governments in terms of the Premier of the day, and the minister of the day, there has been considerable discussion taking place about it. I will be very pleased to share my friend's views on this important issue with the minister, because I think he recognizes it is extremely timely, particularly when there's a discussion of greenbelt legislation which would impact—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Kormos: Minister, every time a tourist buys a bottle of wine labelled Ontario wine, they're getting scammed, they're getting ripped off, because that bottle contains as much as 70% foreign content. Now, at an earlier point in time in this Legislature, you said, "Ontario wines should be 100% Ontario grape, bar none. If there is even one grape from elsewhere in a bottle of so-called Ontario wine, then sorry, it's not Ontario wine.... At the very least government could make it quite clear that Ontario wine means 100% Ontario grapes."

Now, as a member of Dalton McGuinty's cabinet, are you going to stand up in this House and confirm that you still believe that, or have you changed your mind, and is that why you're not advocating for vineyards and grape growers in Niagara?

Hon Mr Bradley: I say to the member that I am advocating on behalf of the greenbelt provisions in the Niagara Peninsula, because I have fought for many years, as member has, to preserve agricultural land in the Niagara Peninsula. I continue to support legislation that would protect that land from the kind of development from which I know the member and his predecessor, Mel Swart, and members of the Preservation of Agricultural

Land Society all would want to see it protected. I continue to support that, and I will not move from that position.

Having said that, I recognize that there is input that has come from the farming community, and I'm always happy to share that input with the Minister of Agriculture and Food, the Minister of Consumer and Business Services and others who have specific responsibilities. But I note that the member, when he was minister, did not make changes to the legislation, nor did the Conservative government, nor did—

The Speaker: New question.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, we know that members of the trade union movement are visiting Queen's Park today and that one of the concerns of working people in Ontario is worker health and safety. You've told the Legislature on numerous occasions that improving health and safety is your number one priority. In the past, you've discussed some of the activities being undertaken by your ministry to safeguard workers. My community of Mississauga East has many labourers in high-risk jobs, and these families want to make sure that their loved ones come home safely.

Can you update us on some of your new initiatives aimed at making sure workers get home safely at the end of the day, Minister?

1550

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I would like to thank the member from Mississauga East for the question. I'd also like to thank him for his passionate advocacy on behalf of his constituents and the working people of his constituency.

The fact is, workplace injuries take a terrible human toll in every workplace in this province. Some 300,000 people every year are injured in workplace incidents, so we've taken action. We announced in July the hiring of 200 health and safety inspectors, and I'm pleased to announce that I'm going to be seeing the first 100 of them start their training next week. That's real progress. They'll be targeted to the riskiest workplaces. The fact of the matter is that only 2% of workplaces account for 10% of the injuries and 21% of the costs. If we can address those, we'll make a substantial improvement in workplace health and safety.

I'm looking forward to the supplementary.

Mr Fonseca: The human costs you mention are staggering: sadly, you say, 300,000 workplace accidents a year in Ontario. What other measures are you taking to ensure the well-being of workers in this province?

Hon Mr Bentley: With respect to some of the other measures we've taken, we've changed and improved the occupational exposure limit procedures. Those are the limits that protect workers and businesses from the most dangerous chemicals and substances in the workplace. I know that my colleague from Mississauga East has been

a passionate advocate with respect to making sure that workers benefit from the most recent scientific and medical information.

There's something else he's been talking about: He's asked me about the business cost of workplace injuries. It's estimated that every year injuries cost businesses \$12 billion in lost productivity, retraining, rehiring and increased WSIB costs. So if we could improve workplace health and safety, we could benefit not only the workers, but all of the—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Member from Oshawa, new question.

COURT FACILITIES

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, as you're well aware, there's an issue of strong concern in the region of Durham, and it's more or less two-fold. First, of course, is the new court facilities and when your process is going to go through. But in the interim, the concern is the utilization of the current facilities that are available.

We know you're in negotiations. We wonder what's going to take place, how the negotiations are going. Second, if they fall through, where are you going to go with court facilities in the region of Durham?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Negotiations are going very well, I can say to the member. We all want the same thing: We want modern, supportive court facilities. I look forward to providing to the member an update with good news in the very near future.

PETITIONS

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a petition signed by several hundred residents of Leeds-Grenville.

"Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to phase out these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union" actions "and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs....

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnett's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation

that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

TUITION

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

“Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

“Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (1) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (2) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (3) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students.”

I also sign this petition.

CANCER CARE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas people of all ages with cancer have the right to seek treatment in their own area without the added trauma and obstacles imposed by having to travel great distances while unwell; and

“Whereas the citizens of Barrie and Innisfil have shown their good faith and continue to fundraise for their share of the cost for the development of a regional cancer centre, enabling area patients to receive their life-saving treatment close to home, near their family and friends; and

“Whereas the building of a regional cancer care centre will remove the barrier for area patients to receive their life-saving treatment close to home;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to provide the approvals and funding necessary to commence construction of the Royal Victoria Hospital cancer care centre.”

I support this and affix my signature.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition here from the University of Western Ontario in the city of London.

“Whereas consumers of alcoholic beverages should be fully aware of the dangers and effects of consuming alcohol during pregnancy. In Canada, it is estimated that up to three in every 1,000 babies are born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.... FASD has been recognized in Canada as one of the leading causes of preventable birth defects and developmental delay in children.... We propose an amendment to act 43, which legislates signage in all facilities that sell alcoholic beverages. Our proposal is that, in addition to signage, warnings should be printed on the labels of alcoholic beverage containers, indicating that drinking during pregnancy can cause FASD.

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly as follows.”

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, in support of volunteer firefighters:

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs, and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

“Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott’s Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

It’s signed by hundreds of people from my riding.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Pursuant to standing order 30(b), I am now required to call orders of the day.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Mr Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent to deliver my petition to the Legislature.

The Speaker: Do I have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RESTRUCTURATION DU SECTEUR DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr Duncan moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'm proud to rise in the House today and begin third reading debate on Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act, 2004. I am pleased to share my time with my parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre, and to publicly thank her for all of her good work in committee leading up to third reading of this bill.

Bill 100 is a major response to key concerns, a bill that redresses past challenges and maps out a clear direction for the future. Consider where we were 14 months ago when we took office. There was no stability in the electricity sector. There was confusion. There was an utter lack of confidence by investors. Our government was determined to set it right and to bring long overdue stability and balance back to the sector.

The historical model for electricity in Ontario, the old Ontario Hydro, was an unregulated monopoly. After many years of success in the first half of the 20th century, the company began to lose its way and, by the mid-1990s, it was responsible for more than \$38 billion of debt.

Our predecessors in government tried to address this problem by taking a radically different approach. They broke up Ontario Hydro, dismantled the central planning infrastructure that was at the heart of the old system and created a market. However, by fully entrusting Ontario's electricity supply to the market, they exposed Ontarians to unacceptable volatility and unacceptable risks to the adequacy of supply.

Bill 100 would bring Ontario's electricity sector to a point between these two extremes: a point where Ontarians can be confident about the future adequacy of supply, while investors know that Ontario is a safe and inviting place to invest; a point where Ontario's electricity sector can find stability so that it will serve Ontarians for many years to come; a point where Ontarians will be able to depend on a reliable, sustainable and diverse supply of affordable power; a point at which the environmental footprint of the electricity sector is progressively reduced.

Bill 100 is not a stand-alone piece of legislation. It is, instead, an extensive set of amendments to two pre-existing acts: the Electricity Act and the Ontario Energy Board Act. As a result, it should be read in conjunction with those two pieces of legislation to understand the full picture of the resulting structure of the electricity sector in Ontario. What would result from these changes is a more robust and improved legislative framework.

The most important element of Bill 100 is the creation of a new institution, the Ontario Power Authority. The authority would have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the long-term adequacy of supply in Ontario. To support this mandate, the authority would be responsible for medium- and long-term electricity demand and supply forecasting, conservation and load management, and procurement of electricity capacity or supply as necessary.

The principal means for the OPA's fulfillment of its responsibility in the electricity sector would be the integrated power supply plan. This is a crucial new development in Ontario's electricity sector. The old Ontario Hydro periodically developed a long-term plan, but the last time this was done was 1989. Since then, the Ontario electricity sector has operated without an overall direction. The integrated power supply plan would be a public document, transparent, thoroughly scrutinized and subject to review and updating.

The Minister of Energy would kick off the preparation of the plan by providing to the OPA a series of directives. These directives would embody the intentions of the government of the day with respect to energy policy issues where there remains a clear and enduring public interest. They would include a target for energy conservation, a target for the use of clean, renewable energy, and a target for the relative mix of long-term supply sources in the sector with a particular focus on the use of nuclear energy.

The ministerial directives would form the core around which the plan would be developed. The OPA, in consultation with stakeholders and based on the best technical advice and forecasting available, would prepare a plan for conservation, supply and transmission that would achieve the targets. At all times, the obligation of the OPA would be to ensure the long-term adequacy of supply in the province according to planning principles generally accepted in the energy sector. In doing this work, the OPA would call upon all the resources at its disposal.

It is expected that the OPA would include at least three branches: the conservation bureau, a division responsible for forecasting, and a division responsible for procurement. Each would contribute to the planning process according to their area of expertise.

As I noted, it is the government's intention that the OPA would prepare the plan in consultation with stakeholders. While a variety of processes could be used to satisfy this intention, it is important to note that the OPA as an organization is intended to be administrative in nature and therefore will not conduct consultations

through hearings or similar adversarial proceedings. The OPA would develop consultative processes appropriate to its needs in preparing the plan.

Once the plan is complete and approved for publication by the OPA board of directors, it would be transmitted to the Ontario Energy Board. The OEB, as regulator, would be responsible for the review of the plan in a timely manner as set out by the minister in regulation.

The OEB would review the plan using its normal public hearings process, which would provide interveners an opportunity to comment on the plan as proposed by the OPA and ensure full public transparency about the future of the sector.

The OEB would focus on three requirements: first, that the plan as proposed by the OPA would fulfill the minister's directives; second, that it fulfill those directives in an efficient and economically prudent manner; and third, consistent with its statutory mandate, that consumer interests are protected in the plan.

It is the government's intention that the OEB thoroughly consider the plan proposed by the OPA, but within the limits of time and scope set out by the OEB's objectives and governing regulations.

Ultimately, the purpose of the OEB review is to ensure the plan would be a reasonable course of action to fulfill the government's intentions and ensure supply adequacy in the province. If the OEB finds fault with the plan, then it would be referred back to the OPA for reconsideration and resubmission to the OEB. When approved by the OEB, the plan would become a guide for the electricity sector and, in particular, for the government institutions within it.

Conservation would be a cornerstone of the plan and is a high priority for our government. Creating a conservation culture in Ontario is overdue, essential and a key element in ensuring long-term prosperity by limiting our energy supply needs.

The conservation bureau, situated within the Ontario Power Authority and led by the chief energy conservation officer of Ontario, would play a key role in promoting conservation and delivering province-wide conservation programs.

The bureau would be responsible for determining the potential for energy conservation in Ontario, based on available technology and economic conditions. An annual report would be publicly delivered, which would be a lightning rod for public attention on energy conservation, providing a venue to highlight significant opportunities for action, whether by the government or the private sector.

The bureau would work with other institutions and stakeholders in the energy sector to promote the adoption of energy-saving technologies and to educate the public on the importance of conservation. Providing conservation tools and opportunities to consumers, either directly through province-wide programs or through partners, would be a key part of the bureau's activities.

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The bureau, as part of the Ontario Power Authority, would contribute to the development of the integrated power supply plan, ensuring that the plan would properly take into account all opportunities for conservation. Through its own activities, the bureau would then seek to ensure that the conservation portion of the plan is carried out.

Conservation will help to limit the need for electricity supply in Ontario, but supply will always be required. Electricity and other forms of energy are an essential part of our economy and are literally all around us.

Ontario is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, including opportunities to harness clean, renewable energy, such as results from hydroelectric dams and windmills. In addition, Ontario has relied on diverse sources of electric power, including fossil fuels and nuclear energy. Other sources of electricity are constantly being developed or refined, including energy from biomass, solar energy, geothermal energy and hydrogen-based fuel cells. In the future, all of these can be expected to be important to Ontario in varying degrees.

However, building and operating electricity generation facilities is an expensive and risky undertaking. Capital costs are high, the lifetime of most facilities is measured in decades, and a highly trained and costly labour force is required to operate plants safely and efficiently.

But consumption varies from year to year, and new technologies and upstart competitors can render expensive facilities obsolete before their usefulness expires.

This is the conundrum that has always faced electricity planners: how to ensure that supply adequacy is never jeopardized, while at the same time encouraging efficiency so that electricity costs can be controlled.

Fully centralized systems like the old Ontario Hydro result in risks being fully assumed by ratepayers or taxpayers. The result of that was the massive stranded debts that are still being borne by the people of this province.

Bill 100 would see a mixed system of supply to answer this need.

Ontario would have a combination of regulated generation facilities providing continuous power and other facilities competing in the marketplace to provide electricity to consumers. This element of competition and risk sharing with private investors in the market would provide a higher level of discipline on all electricity suppliers and reduce the risks borne by Ontario's ratepayers.

The electricity market would be operated by the Independent Electricity System Operator. Bill 100 would continue the bulk of the operations of the current Independent Electricity Market Operator, with some changes. The responsibility for medium- and long-term demand forecasting would be moved to the new OPA. In addition, responsibility for the market surveillance panel would be transferred to the Ontario Energy Board. In most other respects, however, the market would continue to operate as it does now.

The integrated plan would identify how much generation is needed in different parts of the province and of

what type, whether baseload, intermediate or peaking. To the extent that new facilities are required to meet these needs, the plan would provide clear signals to potential investors and developers.

It should be noted that demand-side management measures can sometimes be substitutes for generation. Arrangements for load shifting or voluntary demand curtailment can be used as an alternative to peak generation capacity and represent a significant opportunity for future development.

If no entity comes forward to take advantage of opportunities identified in the plan, whether to provide needed supply or stimulate demand-side measures, then the OPA would have the ability to encourage the building of generation capacity through procurement processes.

While an obvious tool for procurement would be a request-for-proposal process or some other form of contracting, these need not be the only ways to ensure that adequate long-term electricity supply is developed in the province. It is possible that the market could evolve, as it has in some other jurisdictions, to provide generators and potential generators with appropriate incentives to invest. A fully mature market is not likely to be limited to the so-called spot or real-time market.

In the future, it is expected that various forward markets for energy and capacity could be developed. These would help to ensure that generators have sufficient certainty in a competitive environment to take on the risks associated with construction of new facilities.

Moving forward with this market evolution in a prudent and cost-effective manner would be a key priority for the IESO. Doing so would allow the Ontario Power Authority to leave the development of new generation to the market, rather than relying on contracting processes.

Along with conservation and generation, delivery of electricity through transmission and distribution would form a fundamental part of the integrated plan. High-voltage transmission in particular would be a focus for the OPA's planning function.

In many instances, new transmission and additional local generation can be substitutes for each other in solving local supply problems. The OPA will be responsible for examining these choices and determining which are preferable according to a variety of factors, including cost efficiency, reliability, safety and sustainability.

A key objective of this bill is the reduction of the environmental footprint of the electricity system as a whole. While the burning of fossil fuels is often the most visible sign of the environmental cost of our electricity system, it should also be noted that the construction of high-voltage transmission systems, often cutting through otherwise untouched parts of our province, represents a serious environmental issue.

Where possible and economically feasible, it is desirable that Ontario move to a more distributed system of electricity generation, where clean generation capacity is situated close to the consumers who require the power.

Historically, Ontario Hydro built our electricity system along the opposite lines, with a small number of very

large generation facilities and an extensive system of wires. It will take many years, and even decades, to slowly move our grid to a greater balance between small and large generation facilities. In the meantime, many technical barriers to changing the nature of the grid must be overcome.

Distribution will largely be outside the scope of the integrated plan, but not entirely so. In some cases, small generation facilities are able to supply power directly to their local areas on low-voltage distribution wires.

All generation, whether large or small, that participates in the market for electricity needs to be included within the scope of the integrated plan to ensure that all factors affecting reliability are taken into account. Only generation facilities that are truly outside of the grid, typically because they are located within a consumer facility, such as a large factory, should exist outside of the plan.

Distribution companies may also be important conduits for conservation programs, and in that way would also be affected by the plan.

Finally, the OEB will also play a role not only in the approval of the integrated plan, but also in its implementation, by using the regulatory authorities and instruments at its disposal to facilitate and expedite the accomplishment of specific elements of the plan.

The OEB would continue to license all players in the electricity system, set transmission and distribution rates, and would also set the prices for the regulated generation facilities and design the regulated price plan that would be available to designated consumers. In performing all of these functions, the OEB would ensure consistency with the integrated plan. Rates and prices should be consistent with conservation plans and the need for new supply or transmission facilities.

In addition, as the OEB performs its other functions, such as reviewing market rules, ensuring the fairness and transparency of the OPA procurement process and overseeing the market surveillance panel, it should strive to ensure that the objectives of the integrated plan are met.

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For consumers, the complex institutional arrangements in the electricity sector that are being reshaped by Bill 100 are not a primary concern. Consumers are focused on reliability and cost. The lights must turn on when consumers flip the switch. Small business consumers, as well as other consumers, have to feel comfortable in the pricing and reliability of cost structures. For many of them, and in particular residential and small business consumers, the most immediate and obvious impact of Bill 100 would be the regulated price plan.

First contemplated in Bill 4, introduced and passed last year, the regulated price plan would smooth prices for eligible consumers so that they pay the true cost of electricity over time but are not subject to day-to-day market volatility. It should be noted that larger consumers, particularly industrial consumers, would continue to have all of the options and flexibility to make supply arrangements that they have currently.

Bill 100 sets out the elements that would have to be taken into account by the OEB when designing the regulated rate plan. This would include the stability of the regulated baseload supply, any other contracted obligations held by the OPA, as well as the expected market price of electricity.

Eligible consumers would get the benefit of predictable prices, which would be revised periodically by the OEB to ensure that full costs are paid. Consumers who are eligible for the regulated price plan would not be constrained to accept those prices. They would have the option, if they so choose, to purchase their power directly from the market, or from an energy retailer.

It is crucial that all members of this assembly understand the options and opportunities available to their constituents, so that they can communicate with and educate them. All constituents are Ontario electricity consumers. We all share an obligation to Ontario electricity consumers to ensure that they have the information and the tools they need to make the best, most informed and effective choices about their consumption of electricity.

Bill 100 would create a system that is balanced, a system in which the various institutions function seamlessly and in a coordinated manner, and in which there would be little overlap and duplication of functions.

Generators, distributors and other stakeholders would have the benefit of a clear, public and transparent long-term plan to help guide their behaviour.

Consumers would have the benefit of stable and predictable prices and an electricity sector that emphasizes reliability, sustainability, diversity and affordability, all while being environmentally responsible.

I am very pleased to introduce the bill for third reading today, and I am anxiously awaiting the words of my parliamentary assistant, the member for Etobicoke Centre, who has done so much, particularly in conservation. It needs to be noted that she has in fact put conservation back on the agenda in Ontario, and I she know has important observations that all members would be wise to listen to.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I am absolutely delighted to stand in support of third reading of Bill 100. I'm going to share my time with my colleague from Don Valley West.

One of the things I have learned is how complex this particular file really is and how important it also is to be able to express to people in the broader community in what I call Canadian Tire language—simple language—so they can understand.

This morning I heard one of the most interesting pieces of advice. Although, unfortunately, I cannot share with you the person's name because I did not ask permission, I can certainly share the advice. The advice was during a fairly—not difficult, but contentious interview. The person being interviewed finally said, "OK, let's stop all of this and let's spice things up by adding just a few facts." And I thought, "That really is what the electricity Bill 100 is all about. There are just a few facts out

there that need to be stated, and stated in language that people can understand, because it is so complex.

Before I do that, I'd like to pay a particular tribute to my minister, Minister Duncan, the Minister of Energy. When the Premier has spoken about being open, transparent, accessible and accountable, there's no question in my mind that he has meant this gentleman in particular. I say that because I think he has met with, between us, 500 to 600 people. When he said, "Come to me with your ideas and your expressions of interest in terms of how we can work this sector together," he truly meant it, and the door was opened, and not opened once but many times. His schedule, being House leader, is also exhaustive, so you know when he put that effort in place, he truly and sincerely meant it. Then again we listened, because when we went forward with the amendments, over 94 amendments, 60 to 70 of those were amendments from the government itself. So you know that the minister had listened to the stakeholders who had come in and expressed their concerns. That really does speak to the issue of accountability and accessibility. I pay great tribute to this gentleman because he certainly has enabled this government to move forward on that file in particular with the kind of transparency and openness that we said we would do

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mrs Cansfield: Absolutely.

Here are just a couple of the facts I wanted to speak about before we go into some parts of the bill.

One of the strangest things I've encountered when speaking to people was that they didn't realize that there was a price for the electricity, and then of course a price to get it to where they needed it in their homes. When they thought they were having a price of 4.3 cents for electricity, of course they thought it was really quite cheap. What they didn't know and hadn't been told was that it was not sustainable.

If you're going to provide leadership in government, one of the most important things you have to be able to do is put your house in order, and that means your financial house in order, your books in order. In order for us to have kept the 4.3-cent price cap, that billion-dollar deficit would have grown. That billion-dollar deficit would have ended up, really, on our children's children to pay off in the future. That was totally unacceptable.

The other part that was totally unacceptable was the fact that people didn't realize that in Canada we are the second-largest consumers of energy in the world, and not all of it is about geography. A great deal of it is about how we use our energy, the fact that we'd never been given the tools, either in terms of information or technology, or really even the understanding of why we needed to change our habits, our behaviour, around how we used our electricity, because there was no need to. It was cheap, or so we thought. But it really was very expensive, when you added the deficit of over \$1 billion that had been accumulated. So the government said, we said, "What we're going to do is actually encourage you to pay the true price of electricity. At the same time, it's

not just what goes into your meter but how you use that electricity that's really important: what you do every day; how you manage your electricity. We are going to put in place the tools to help you do that." Certainly, Bill 100 does it.

The first part obviously is going to be the new hybrid model for the electricity sector. We're going to look at the low-volume consumers and then the larger consumers. People will know because the Ontario Energy Board, which is the board that regulates these prices, will regulate the price in April next year and give you a whole year of what you will know will be your price of electricity, and then you'll be able to manage that.

On top of that, you will also get a two-tier price system. If you use your electricity in off-peak times, you will get a cheaper price. It's really like the telephone, if you remember long-distance costs. If you call after 6, it's cheaper. Now you may make the choice: You can either do your clothes in the middle of the afternoon or you can do them in the evening, after 6. It will be up to you. We will not dictate the time, but what we will do is give you the tool with which you may make a choice, an educated choice, a choice where you'll know, because you'll also have an interval meter or a type of metering process, a function that will enable you to actually look at and monitor your own consumption.

I know a lot of people have said things like, "Well, why would I need one? They're very expensive." In fact, the research that has come out of Britain in particular will show you that there's about a 10% reduction on usage alone, regardless of the price, simply because people can now monitor their electricity use. They realize, when they leave something on and leave the room, or when something is plugged in, like a television, and even though it's not turned on it still uses electricity, they can unplug, they can change, they can monitor their use. Ten per cent is significant. That's a consistent research product that's come out of Great Britain.

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It would be interesting to see what comes out of Italy, where they have put into homes 19 million of the 30 million they are going to. Statistically, what I've heard so far is that they've got about a 38% saving just on data collection alone. Those are significant savings that can go back into the system, which will keep your prices lower. It makes that kind of difference.

The other thing we're going to do is create the Ontario Power Authority. The Ontario Power Authority, as the minister indicated, will have the authority to enter into contractual obligations for supply. He spoke a great deal about that.

I'd like to speak about another part of the Ontario Power Authority, and that is the conservation bureau. This is going to be the first bureau of its kind in Ontario. Actually, I think it's the first bureau of its kind in North America, because I don't know of any others. There certainly is an office of sustainability that comes out of the President's office in the United States, but it's not the same as a conservation bureau. The person who will be in

charge, the chief conservation bureau officer, will have the authority to determine province-wide policies on how we, as a province, can sustain and control our electricity consumption. For example, you could have a fridge buyback program.

There are some other initiatives out there that might be a possibility. We're currently working with the Social Housing Services Corp to address the \$750-million energy bill that over one million people in social housing, municipal housing, not-for-profits and co-operatives are currently experiencing. They will have the authority to work even more with them to lower not only their consumption, but ultimately their costs.

We're also working with the Canadian Environmental Law Association and the Low-Income Energy Network to develop a model of energy conservation programs for local distribution utilities right across the province—there are about 94 of them—where they can go into their local communities and adapt policies, programs, and develop those that meet those communities' needs.

That's unique as well. We're saying that it's not going to be the cookie cutter approach and one whole program will be the answer to everything. In fact, we've given the authority—under the previous Bill 4, for the local distribution companies—about \$225 million, which is the third tranche of their profit that they can recover now that the cap freeze is off. But they must spend one year's profit back into conservation measures in their community over a three-year period. Now there are—what?—71 of those local distribution companies that have actually come forward with programs that are unique to their community, some of which are very exciting, whether it's dealing with some capital involvement for their own, whether it's looking at load management or whether it's looking at education.

I've heard things from London, for example, where they're actually going to encourage every student in London-Middlesex to become energy auditors. I know that in Bluewater they are working very hard with their local education community. They're doing the same in Chatham-Kent. Dr Suzuki has been there a couple of times. They've involved their facilities and the students on how they can manage their energy. Shelburne just put up solar panels, and they're looking to put up a wind turbine—exciting opportunities through the conservation bureau that can be worked through their local distribution companies.

Light exchanges have been going on in Mississauga. Enersource, an extraordinary company that did this the first time, actually went out to their community and said, "Give me your old lights because those old lights draw about 159 watts, versus the new LED lights, the light emitting diodes, which only draw about four watts." So they took all that old wattage in the lights off the grid and put the new ones on by a really good exchange that went on. We hope to have that right across the province by this time next year.

I don't know if anybody knows, but it's about 500 megawatts of electricity that we use during the holiday

season for holiday lights. If we can diminish that load, that's a significant saving because, remember, as my minister has said many times, a megawatt saved is just as good as a megawatt built. That's the kind of thing that we're looking to do within energy conservation.

Some of the other initiatives that are easy to do, and Bill 100 enables us to do them, are simple things like wrapping your pipes, caulking your windows, recognizing where you place your windows if you're building a house. Really, even where you plant a tree can make a difference. There's a whole new, exciting world around solar panels, solar voltaic, working with both water and sun. It's amazing what's out there.

The other part that's amazing is that there's a real appetite out there in the community as well. They're starting to recognize that we want a green planet.

One of the things that Bill 100 enables us to do is to look to those alternative renewable fuels that have been long overdue. There was an excellent report that was done on renewable fuels during the last government's time, and it's really unfortunate that they didn't pick up and run with it, because, again, it really captured the essence of renewable fuels, whether it's biomass or biodiesel, whether they were looking at the wind turbines or additional water. There are just so many things that can be done, and there are people who want to do them. The technologies that are out there that are new and exciting, that have just come about in the last few years—amazing. The entrepreneurial spirit is really alive and well in Ontario, and it's exciting to see these people coming forward. They want to enable us to provide the initiatives in terms of conservation and demand-side response. That's one of the things Bill 100 will do that's long overdue.

Part of the other things we'll do—and maybe my colleague from Don Valley West will speak more about it, because she has been involved in education and training—is the whole issue around eco-schools and actually teaching the children from a very young age how important it is for that environmental footprint they leave and we leave on planet earth. Many of us feel that we're custodians and that we need to be able to sustain this earth in order to pass it on to the next generation, when it becomes their responsibility to look after it for the generation that succeeds them. Again, that really is part of what Bill 100 does, because it's an enabling piece of legislation, through the conservation bureau. It allows us to look beyond. There's no question that we have to look at supply and, as my minister indicated, the issue of transmission, but it's really looking beyond that, through the conservation bureau and the things we can do, and that's an exciting part of Bill 100.

One of the other very complex areas is the independent market operator, which is going to have the name change. In essence, these are the watchdog over the market for the consumers. They're not a research facility. They actually look over the market and help determine that market and maintain it for the consumers. Again, the bill enables and strengthens that role for them.

There are going to be changes to the Ontario Energy Board Act. These are our regulators. Again, they are the folks who protect the consumers in many respects. They are going to work very closely with the local distribution companies, which, years ago, used to be called the utility companies. They have a nice new name now: LDCs—another example of how we make this more complex than it really needs to be at times. Those local distribution companies or utilities will work through the regulator on the plans they put out that will go back into their community, that will enable them to go on the demand-side response and to make a significant difference.

So there are a lot of changes that are going to take place. They are exciting times. I find that when I speak to people and I talk about the 18,000 megawatts that's needed by the year 2020. I think that one of the most exciting things I'd heard from my minister was when he said that there is absolutely no reason why there shouldn't be a long-term strategic plan for energy in this province. That's true. Regardless of who is in government, the people of Ontario deserve a long-term strategy. That's what the beginning of Bill 100 does; it puts that in place.

That's the kind of leadership, that's the kind of legacy, that's the kind of thoroughness, transparency and accountability that I believe the people of Ontario want. That's what I would want as someone who goes out to vote.

The other part that's really important is working together with both the municipal and the federal levels. There is absolutely no reason that a number of the initiatives that we have put in place cannot piggyback on initiatives that are there at the federal level. There's no reason, if you want to look at the concept of sustainability, which has its footprint federally, why it cannot have its footprint provincially. In fact, it should have its footprint right across this country.

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When we speak about young people who can learn about such projects as Hurley Island, which is the pan-Canadian science, it should be virtually in every subject, for every student from JK to 12, so that children learn from an early age how important it is to sustain their earth. The other is that obviously we need to work with our municipal partners, because they in turn will bear a lot of responsibility through their bylaws enabling wind turbines, for example, or biodigesters to actually happen.

It is that working together that, at the end of the day, a taxpayer likes. It's, "Forget the squabbling; forget the bickering. We're not really interested in that. If you've got a dollar, it's my dollar. Spend it well and be accountable, and ultimately work with the other levels of government, because it's my same dollar. It just gets spread around." I ask that of myself; my constituents ask that of me. I think this is something that the government has provided the leadership for: working together municipally, provincially and federally. It's long overdue. I hear that consistently in my constituency in Etobicoke Centre.

It's been an absolute pleasure to be able to stand and to say Bill 100 is on its way. I wanted to acknowledge and thank a number of people who participated in the hearings. We had over 150 submissions, but I know the member from Ottawa participated; Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot; obviously Don Valley West—strong committee members, all of them—London; Niagara Falls. There were many who came. Of all the things that I wish had occurred, I wish we had had the opportunity to go a little further, but unfortunately that was not to be because we couldn't find consensus on broadening our scope.

Maybe another time that we have something as important as an energy bill, we'll be able to rethink how we reach out to this very large province of Ontario. I think people forget that it is as large as Western Europe; it's huge. It's just as important that we go to Wawa as to Windsor or Ottawa. We need to recognize that people from all constituencies should have an opportunity other than just to come to Toronto to participate in committee hearings. I hope that in the future we will broaden our scope and that we will have the opportunity to touch base with more people.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I too want to acknowledge the parliamentary assistant to energy, the member for Etobicoke Centre. She has been a tireless advocate for this bill, and particularly on the issue of conservation.

I want to pick up on a couple of comments that both she and the minister made. The one that the member for Etobicoke Centre just made about the long-term strategy: It seems to me that, on a number of fronts, one of the things this government is trying to do is to put plans in place so that there is a bit of a blueprint for how to move forward on a number of difficult files. Certainly the electricity file, the energy sector, is an incredibly complex and difficult one. It is, however, a defining characteristic and has been a defining characteristic of this province that we have a steady, available supply of energy. I think there is no one in this House who would disagree that this is a critical issue for this province, to get this right.

In the absence of a long-term strategy, in the absence of a plan, we're condemned to ad hocery, and I think ad hocery in a sector like the energy file is a very bad idea. It leads to bad decisions and it leads to panic reactions, so that caps are put on and then caps are taken off and caps are put on again. That is not the way to do business. There has to be a plan on how to price electricity, on what the mix is going to be and on how we're going to produce electricity over the long term. That's what Bill 100 is about, creating that plan.

The minister spoke about reducing the environmental footprint of the electricity system. That's the other piece of this plan. We need to think about the long-term viability of whatever system we put in place. The move toward more renewables, the move to clean energy, the emphasis on conservation: Those are the strategies that must be in place if we're going to have future sustainability in this province.

I commend the minister for bringing this bill forward, and I commend our government for making these moves.

I want to talk a little bit about what people who came to the hearings said to us. As the member for Etobicoke Centre said, it would have been great to have been able to visit more parts of the province. As it was, we were able to hear from hundreds of people, both in written submissions and visiting the committee. Almost to a person, the presenters said, "Yeah, we acknowledge that there's a move in the right direction." There were concerns, there were issues. Obviously, that's why people come to public hearings. That's why we hold public hearings, so we can hear the concerns and listen to the issues. But there was a real consensus that something has to be done in this sector. There has to be a plan.

I just want to read what Joan Huzar, president of the Consumers Council of Canada, said to us: "The Consumers Council of Canada applauds Energy Minister Dwight Duncan's announcement that he intends to bring a measure of sanity to the chaos of Ontario's electricity marketplace."

"Establishing a new Ontario Power Authority to oversee Ontario electricity well-being is a splendid idea and we are encouraged by the announcement that the air we all breathe will benefit as coal-fired generation will be phased out within a few years." That was also in a letter to the editor of the *Toronto Star* on April 21, 2004.

That phrase, "bringing sanity to the chaos," underscores the rational approach that this bill is putting in place.

Jennifer Heneberry of the Positive Power Co-operative, in her presentation to the social policy committee, said, "We were very pleased to see a number of the changes being proposed as part of Bill 100. We feel some of the proposed amendments are going to make it much easier for us, as a community co-operative developing wind power projects, to participate in the electricity market; things like references to non-discriminatory access to the transmission and distribution system, the promotion of cleaner and renewable energy sources and addressing the need for goals around renewable energy production. These are all things we were really happy to see in Bill 100."

Again, that other issue of encouraging renewables, encouraging generation locally, encouraging distributed generation, those are the underpinnings of this bill. People who came to speak to us recognized that's the direction we were moving in and commended us for that.

The Ontario Waterpower Association's Paul Norris said, "The government has moved quickly and decisively to articulate and begin to implement its vision for electricity policy and the importance of renewable energy."

I think it's quite clear that we're moving in the right direction in terms of putting some stability into the system.

One of the things I learned during the hearings—I'd gone into this as a fairly new member in this place with the public power versus private power debate ringing in my ears, because that was the way the debate had been

framed by some of the opposition members. It was quite clear to me, listening to the people who came to speak to us, that what consumers are interested in is reliable, cost-efficient and safe energy. That's what they are looking for. The false debate of public versus private really has been replaced in this province by a debate about how we make sure power is reliable, clean and renewable and safe.

That's what we need to focus on, and that's what this bill does. That's the direction we're moving in with this government's energy plan.

As the parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Education, it's quite clear to me that one of the cornerstones of our energy plan has to be the education of our children—the work of the conservation bureau to start to change the culture of how we use energy in this province and understanding that it's not an infinite resource, that in fact there are limits to our ability to create power and energy and, therefore, there have to be limits to our usage, and that starts with our children. We have to change our habits, but we also have to teach our children that conservation, that doing business differently in terms of energy usage, is critical, and that's part of this government's plan.

1650

I just want to say that being part of this dialogue has been a terrific experience for me personally. It's a terrific opportunity and a change moment. It is a teachable moment in Ontario, because people know that the status quo is not sustainable. We are very lucky to have the people who are working on this file working on it, and we're lucky to be part of a transition that's going to take us to a more rational, more stable energy supply in this province. I'm happy to support Bill 100.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'll be speaking in just a few moments to this bill as well. I appreciate the comments made by the minister and the other two speakers on this bill, but we'll be zeroing in on the fact that this bill is the result of another broken promise. We'll go into that in a lot more detail in a few moments, but the bottom line here is that the government and the Minister of Energy are trying to take credit for a lot of programs and committee work that have been done by the previous government.

Right off the bat, I think of the select committee on alternative energy sources. That was an all-party committee that came up with a number of recommendations, which they presented to the former government, and I think we accepted those recommendations unanimously. Those were things like wind power, solar power etc—different sources of energy. I know it cost the citizens of the province a lot of money to send that committee across the province and in fact around the world, and they came back with some of the ideas we're seeing here today.

I will be having an opportunity in a couple of minutes to make a few comments. What happened this afternoon is unfortunate. I thought we'd be getting equal time this

afternoon. How it has worked out is that we will split the remaining time with the New Democratic Party, but the bottom line is that we should have had an opportunity for all three parties to have equal time on this time allocation motion.

It's a time allocation motion. They're ramming it through, like the two budget bills the other day, Bill 106 and Bill 149. Again, more promises not to do time allocation, but here they are breaking their word again.

I appreciate this opportunity to say a few words on this bill.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I just have a few comments. Let me begin by noting that this is time allocation. I think people across Ontario would find it very interesting. This is an issue that is going to affect them in many ways. First, it will affect them on their hydro bill. For many people, it may affect them in terms of their job or not having a job. For many people who operate small businesses, it will be a question of whether they can continue to operate their small business.

I think many people would be somewhat surprised that a government that said it was going to move toward transparency of government and more open and transparent democracy would use time allocation on such a central issue, in effect would try to shut down debate on such an important issue. So third reading of the bill is going to be limited to just a couple of hours of debate here this afternoon, when one would think that legislation like this should have at least a few days of third reading debate. But I suspect I know why the government is in such a hurry to ram this through: The government wants to avoid the debate.

As the government that promised to close all the coal-fired generating stations by 2007, it is now admitting it's not going to close all the coal-fired generating stations by 2007. As the government that said it wanted to keep our electricity system public—in fact, the Premier said that during the election campaign—it's now very clear that the program of this government is to do very much the same program as the former government, except that the former government wanted to privatize through the front door. They were very open about it. This government wants to privatize through the back door and pretend that it's not doing that. I suspect the reason we're seeing time allocation is that the McGuinty government doesn't want that debate to happen very publicly.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to rise and comment all too briefly on the wise words from the members for Etobicoke Centre and Don Valley, who followed on the eloquent presentation of the Minister of Energy.

It occurs to me that there is an old phrase about every journey of 1,000 miles beginning with the first step. That said, it is rather helpful if you know which way you're going, or as my friend Gene Roddenberry is rather fond of saying, "We'll move in the direction in which we're looking." This government, along with some of our partners who have expertise at some alternative energy ideas, is looking at the institution of a conservation ethic

that can begin to turn us around in this province, and I think the two honourable members spoke to that.

If we were to move with the advanced renewable tariffs on the wind power issue, within 10 years we could have 20% of our power in this province as wind, and coupled with a 30% projected saving through conservation, we could have a 50% change in the way we do business and the benefits that would accrue to Ontario.

We're prepared, as a government, to get involved in some new visioning, and to do that we're convinced that we not only need to do some strategic thinking but we need to do some strategic planning around that. We're prepared to do that because we have experienced the costs and risks of doing nothing for far too long. We're going to move ahead and build the kind of energy sector the people of Ontario want to see for this great province.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the time allocation motion dealing with Bill 100.

As was mentioned earlier, there was a considerable amount of work done with the alternative fuels committee. It was an all-party committee that toured around and got input from a number of significant sectors on how we can help this sector, which is very critical to manufacturing in Ontario.

There are certain things that have to be reviewed and looked at, though; for example, the forestry industry. I know, having had some exposure to that in the past, that a lot of forestry industries are deciding, are they in the hydro-producing business or are they in the pulp-and-paper and the forestry industry dealing with fibre? They look at the spot market and, should they be producing the electricity that they normally produce for their own work and industries, they start selling it on the spot market. The difficulty with that is, and I hope the minister takes note, the time allocation required before they can sell on the spot market. Effectively, they need two hours' notification.

The difficulty with that is, when for example New York is having an energy crisis and they want that energy, they need it now. In the event that they have to put a two-hour notice on and they're deciding whether they're shutting down their plant, producing pulp and paper or dimensional lumber, they're actually trying to sell it in New York and other areas where they can make a lot more money. It also puts a lot of other people in employment concerns, whether you're working in the forest or supplying these mills with fibre.

In some other areas, I hope the minister would be able to comment. In the past, the previous government established a committee between MNR and the Ministry of Energy to look at utilizing current MNR facility dams that they have control over. There are over 600 of them that aren't being used now. My understanding was that the committee was shut down. Effectively, these could potentially produce low-flow generation, anywhere from one to five megawatts, which could help the province significantly. The ministry is currently making the other areas available, but I hope the minister is not being told

which ones and letting industry decide how they can best move forward.

1700

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs Cansfield: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Don Valley West, Kenora-Rainy River, Simcoe North, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot and Oshawa for their comments.

There's no question it is the responsibility of this government to keep the lights on. It is also the responsibility of this government to be fiscally responsible to their constituents, to all of their constituents, which is all the people in the province, and at the same time to provide a long-term strategy so they know where their energy supply is coming from.

That's why we are so fortunate to work with people like Mr Paul Gipe, who is one of the foremost wind experts in the world, an absolute pleasure and delight, because he is one of those folks who have been accessible to the minister, to myself and to policy folks around how we can make wind turbines happen in this province in a way that is for both small and large. This is the kind of example of leadership we are providing.

You're right, there are folks who are going to be out there saying, "Chicken Little, the sky will fall." The fact of the matter is that the price of electricity has been subsidized to the point of a billion dollars. You can either pay up front, and at least you know what you're paying, which is what is going to happen with the true price of electricity, or you can hide it and somebody can pay it down the road.

I think it's better to be honest and up front with people, to tell them that this is what the price of electricity is going to be; to provide them with the tools, with the responsibility of monitoring their own consumption and determining their own use; and at the same time make sure we are competitive, in terms of our economy, in dealing with other sectors in North America, in particular in manufacturing and exporting our goods, as well as the development of those goods here. We are working with those sectors. They have been to the table, and they are—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to rise today to respond to Bill 100 and to put you on notice, Mr Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the member from Simcoe North and other members of our caucus, who I'm sure have serious concerns about Bill 100—not really the content so much, in the broadest sense. There are many things we are in agreement with, but it is the high-handed, insensitive manner, once again, of this government, kind of invoking all the rules, closing down the debate and ramming through the price increases. That's really the substance of everything I have to say.

For the viewers, they should know there is a small sequence of history that should be brought to light. The first was when the markets for electricity were opened while we were the government—very controversial.

Howard Hampton was clear on his message—public power—a very clear and very defensible position, I would say.

Our government, at the time, said we were opening the market. We delayed that, and then we delayed it again, but we finally opened it, and as with all things in the market, timing is often important. To cut to the chase, we said the market would open. We had the Pickering plant go down; we had the Bruce plants down; we had the hottest weather on record; prices went through the roof. Guess what? We chickened out and we froze the price at 4.3 cents.

Now I would say this: This is the start. Dalton McGuinty at that time was the Leader of the Opposition and they were barracking all the time in the House about, “Do something for the consumers.” So as a responsible government of the day, we took it upon ourselves, with Minister John Baird at the time, I believe, and we blinked and we froze the price.

Here is where it gets interesting. The Liberals voted to freeze the price. Keep in mind you are dealing with the Liberals. I don't want to offend you now. If anybody starts yelling here, I hope the Speaker will keep them in order. They demanded that we freeze the price or do something to protect the consumer—a fair comment, I might say, because what they were trying to do was respond to their constituents who were screaming on the phones. The NDP voted for the same response.

A bit of history here is that, in response to the public in Ontario, with high prices and short supply, the price went up because of the supply and the temperature and the other driving forces. We listened. We responded. Some in the media would say we blinked, and we froze the price at 4.3 cents, which was voted on by every Liberal of the time. There are more of them today, obviously—they're the government.

What happened was that at that time there was a preparation on the generation side for a tremendous amount of investment, some of which did come to pass. Some of it was the refurbishment of the Bruce plant; some of it was the refurbishment of the Pickering plant; some of it was looking down the road at new generation. So the government formed a task force called the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force. This is their report. That committee was formed. It was chaired by Peter Budd, and eventually by Courtney Pratt.

I had a really decent privilege there. I was asked to sit on that, because of an undying interest in the issue of energy. There was Bruce Ander from the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance; Bruce Boland from Ontario Power Generation; John Brace, with the Association of Power Producers of Ontario; Gunars Ceksters, who is the president and CEO of Enersource; Mike Crawley, president and CEO of AIM PowerGen Corp.

Mr Dunlop: Where have I heard that name before?

Mr O'Toole: He is actually president of the federal Liberal Party. That's no problem. It was a very professional committee. I want to establish that.

There was Don Gibson, who is a partner at McCarthy Tétrault; Dave Goulding, president and CEO of the IMO; Duncan Hawthorne, CEO of Bruce Power; Ed Houghton, chair of the Electricity Distributors Association, at that time; Rebecca MacDonald, chair and CEO of Energy Savings Income Fund; David McFadden, chair of the Stakeholders' Alliance for Electricity Competition and Customer Choice; Paul Norris, president of the Ontario WaterPower Association; Tom Parkinson, president and CEO of Hydro One; Jan Peeters, chair and CEO of Olameter Inc—you may want to remember that name for the future; Bryne Purchase, Deputy Minister of Energy; and Mary-Ellen Richardson, president of the Association of Major Power Consumers.

They came up with a series of recommendations. I'd call them solutions for the future. I think this report—if people contact me, I'll certainly get them a copy of it—is worth reading, because basically Bill 100 is following through on the initiative started by the government.

During the election, they promised to keep the price freeze. This is the game you play. It's very hard to catch a rattlesnake, because it keeps crawling down holes. But the key here is, during the election they were agreeing: “Yes, we're going to keep the price.” Then what do they do? The paint isn't dry on the signs in the new ministers' offices and they introduce Bill 4, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 with respect to electricity pricing, and raise the price.

Some say, “Well, they only raised it from 4.3 to 4.7.” Do the math—and from 5.5. That's a 20% increase on the price of the electrons only. Right there, 20%, first move. It looks small, innocuous and ineffectual, but really it's a 20% increase. It was the first thing you did.

The people were then put on notice that they were going to be paying more and getting less. I could go on. The point I'm really trying to make here is you can't negotiate a business relationship with the likes of that kind of performance. I don't know how else to phrase it. Technically, they're telling you what you want to hear. During the election they said this, and they did that. That's the difficulty. The consumers of Ontario should be put on notice today that there will be a shortage of supply, which is—pardon me—higher prices.

There's really a shell game going on here, because I have a fair amount of material, some of which I'll get to cover. This is the game: They're actually going to give consumers meters in their houses. They already have a meter. It's an old-fashioned one, some would say, but it does the job. It's a little antiquated to the extent that I cannot believe people are making \$40,000 or so a year driving around in a \$40,000 truck to read your meter. What's that about? What century are we living in? They're still going to your house, maybe knocking on the door to read your meter. So they're introducing smart meters, which is a good idea. It's been recommended, and I would support it.

Here's the deal: It's not actually going to be a smart meter; it's really going to be a kind of interval meter. As I understand it, the energy board has reviewed this and

made some recommendations. They are not two-way communication devices, which means that, as a consumer, I'm the price taker. When I turn on the oven or the microwave or the toaster or the computer or the refrigerator—which is on all the time because you want to keep your food safe, so there is little discretion in how we use it—I'm a price taker. I have no idea what I'm paying. That is what is going to happen. I am going to say, "My bill went up." They're going to say, "Well, you're not using your smart meter."

1710

What the smart meter says, and Mrs Cansfield said in her remarks—actually, here is the advice I would give you. There are going to be three prices. If you use electricity off-peak time, the meter will be able to tell you that at 2 o'clock in the morning you can make your toast for breakfast because it's cheaper. You will have to get up at 2 in the morning because it will be a lot cheaper. You can have your coffee, too, when you're up, but then go back to bed because it's pretty early in the morning. Do you follow me?

I see Mr Leal, who could actually be commuting from Peterborough now. He will have to get up at 2 in the morning—

Mr Dunlop: Shower then.

Mr O'Toole: —and shower, have his coffee and get ready, because the electricity will be a reasonable price. It will probably be about six or maybe seven cents. It's four cents now. That's like a 60% increase, by the way. Then he can go back to bed and set the alarm—of course, don't use an electric alarm clock in the event the electricity goes off—and then get up and drive to work. But I digress. I should stay focused here.

The smart meter gives them a tool—I want to bracket this in. I want to frame it up so people actually understand. The consumer is going to be presumed to have some control over their misfortune of the bill. So when you don't realize that electricity is going to have a price of, let's say—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, I'd like a little order here; it's a very important topic. Mr Speaker, are you paying any attention to me? There you go.

There could be three prices. I have watched this very carefully, and perhaps, some would say, too closely. I would say the bottom-line price at 2 o'clock in the morning or something—off-peak time—will probably be five cents. They will probably stick the medium-peak time at supper time because everybody has to cook their food, the kids are coming home from school and they'll want a hot chocolate because it is 20 below zero. So they'll probably stick about five cents, or I'd say maybe six cents, on what I'd call that mid-consumption period. Then, for the very unusual periods of the day, which probably would be when you get up in the morning, because people are cold so they turn the furnace up, have a hot shower, make the coffee and spend all that money on electricity, you're going to get whacked. You are going to pay 100% more to warm up that cup of coffee.

So instead of making eight cups, cut it down to four. I don't know how you're going to save money on this.

It worries me that they are now going to be able to say to the consumer, "You have these three price bands," and with the three price bands what you are going to end up with is—when you get the bill, you'll say, "My goodness, what happened? I used to pay \$78 a month and now it's \$150." Do you know what that is? Pay attention. That's called a tax hike, because this product is not like anything else.

I'm directly responding to the people of Ontario who I know are out there and concerned. They're probably holding their hands in anxiety and worry. Here is what I think is happening.

Mr Dunlop: They're doing without hot water.

Mr O'Toole: They are going to have to shower with cold water. That is what one of the members said, and I think he is on to it.

They are going to say to you, when you get that bill that has doubled, "You aren't using the smart meter." They are going to blame the consumer. Stay tuned. This is a shell game. You're dealing with the Liberal government. Remember the GST they were going to cancel? You can't negotiate with a customer who keeps changing the rules.

Remember the point I'm trying to establish here; it's sequential. Let's review it, class. Before the election, you voted for it; during the election, you promised; after the election, Bill 4.

Now, then, when we had the 4.3 cent power, you criticized us, because you said power is too cheap. For the person who is living on a Canada pension or a reduced pension or a fixed income or has a child with a disability, they need stability of price. They need price sensitivity. You're going to say to them, "You've got to pay the real cost of power. And, by the way, there isn't enough of it because we're closing down the coal plants; therefore, you're going to have to pay more."

The people in Toronto basically will say, "This is good." At the end of the day, I worry almost too much about my constituents and the consumers of Ontario. They're getting hoodwinked here. I'm just going to read a couple things. I'm going to stick to being a little more organized here. These are from today's clippings, so this is a current issue. It's not very glamorous, but to the consumers who are even interested in listening, I would suggest that you read the Toronto Star. It is a fairly Liberal-friendly newspaper. In fact, the Toronto Star is the Liberals' briefing notes.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I like the Toronto Sun.

Mr O'Toole: Exactly. It says here, "Utilities Offer Conservation Carrot." What they're saying in this article in the Toronto Star on December 8 is this: The local distribution companies, your local company that provides your service—in my area it is probably Enbridge or Hydro One. They're the ones that actually deliver the electricity to the House. They're going to be able to say, and it says it right here, that they're going to be able to

increase the price to you. They're going to put you on a plan, and I think Mr Duncan, the minister, spoke about it: It's RPP, the regulated price plan. Boy, is that a fancy one: RPP. Get over it. That just means you're going to really power-purchase—really expensive power-purchase. That's what it is. They should have put that E in there. So they'll be allowed to take five per cent of the savings into higher profits because the Electricity Distributors Association has to have a profit, even though they're owned, in most cases, by the public—either the local municipalities, in the case of Peterborough, or in the case of Veridian—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): That was your bill, John.

Mr O'Toole: —Mr Arthurs would know that, which is good.

Here's another article—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: They are listening, and this is good, but I'm not sure they're learning. This is the problem. They're still voting blindly for Bill 100, which is shocking.

Anyway, this article: I need the viewers to pay attention. You can call me and I will get you these articles. I think it's important. It's the Toronto Star, again, December 8: "Three Hydro Prices Proposed"—now is the confusion. Imagine senior citizens, and they've got to deal with three prices. Imagine a busy, hard-working Ontario family with children in nursery school—maybe there'll be nursery schools or maybe there won't. Maybe there'll be a lot of driving around to hockey games and things like that. They're going to have to be worried about, "Which price is on? Should I turn the hot water tank on or off?" They're downloading this responsibility right to the household. It says right here, "The new pricing system would apply to homeowners with 'smart meters' that record how much power is used hour by hour." But they don't know what the price is; that's the problem. Until they tell them the price, you can't move the demand.

This is important. This is kind of the theory here that we're trying to develop. Yes, people respond to price. That's called price elasticity. This is price-inelastic. If you want to go back to a simple kind of theory here, I put to you, if you're really understanding, this product is price-inelastic. What that means to me, an ordinary person, is that there is not much response to price. I still have to heat the house; I still have to cook the food; I still have to have a shower; I have to run the ventilator for my child that has a breathing problem. I cannot reduce price and I can't reduce consumption beyond a certain threshold.

I would support this if you had a realistic band of prices. I say to the parliamentary assistant, who I have some regard for—I think she did better work when she was a school trustee. Ms Cansfield has worked hard, but she's working for a slave driver. The minister won't listen to her. What I suggest to her is this: I'm not sure what the number should be but I think this could be defined and resolved by some kind of research. I think it's about 800 kilowatt hours a month. I would have a

price of probably about five cents. Arguably, it would be a little higher than—your price now is 4.7 and 5.5. I'd say, make it five cents. It's higher than our price, I agree with that.

1720

Here's the other part of it. They're listening. It's reassuring; they're listening. Usually, they just vote. They just say, "Yes, sir. No, sir."

Interjection: "Yes, Dalton. No, Dalton."

Mr O'Toole: "Yes, Dalton. No, Dalton."

They are engaged on this. Here's the issue: If they respond to price and actually cut down, I would do a little profile on them, Mr McNeely. If you knew that they were consuming 1,100 kilowatt hours a month for the last three years and were able to reduce it to under 1,000, I'd reward them. I'd incent them. That's how I would do it. I would charge them a rate, and if they respond to price, then I would reward them. If they cut their consumption—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I'm willing to support this as an amendment. I moved it as an amendment on the forced hearings on Bill 100—that if consumers save 10%, we would rebate them 10%. But if consumers abuse power—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: You're right, Mr Speaker—well, I believe he's paying attention. If they abuse power, we all pay. We pay because there are environmental implications in all generation. All forms of generation have implications.

I'm going to go back to first principles here, because this very, very complex topic, to an extent, is this: There are two things for sure. As the supply goes down, and if they shut down—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, are you going to take this incessant interruption from the member from Pickering, or do I have to talk over that? I'm trying to make a reasonable debate here, although—

The Acting Speaker: Member from Durham, do you have a concern?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: OK. Proceed.

Mr O'Toole: Here's the point, though. I was trying to make the point that we are putting the system at risk. In fact, if I go back to an independent panel of experts from the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force that I mentioned earlier, the very first of my remarks, one of the recommendations was not to close the coal plants in such a hasty, ill-conceived, ill-considered plan by 2007.

We had a plan. We recognized that. It was a lot more mature and balanced. What we said was, we would slowly phase out coal until it was completely phased out by 2015.

Their plan—there is no plan. After the election, they said that they were going to close the coal plants by 2007. Guess what? Last week, Minister Dwight Duncan, in this House and in the press scrum afterward, was just scrambling, not just because it's another broken promise

but because he said, "We're just going to keep them on, maybe. They're going to be there in case."

He's not being forthright with the people of Ontario. He knows that you'd have to have the engineers, the technicians, the people who shovel the coal or whatever they do—all these various jobs. They would still be there in the factories, on standby. Can you imagine a coal plant like Nanticoke—4,000 megawatts; huge, heaping piles of coal—and them standing there, waiting for the signal from Dwight and Dalton to turn the coal plant on? Can you just imagine it? Holy—listen, it's hard to believe they even thought about this, because what did they say—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Arthurs, what did they say in the report? Have you read it? I'll send you a copy, because it's a must-read on this topic. Otherwise, you should probably leave the chamber, because it really is going by you. What the experts said was, "You can't do it," and he ignored it. He's ignored the advice of all the experts.

I've listened to them, and I respect that. They did not say, "Do not eliminate coal." They said, "Don't do it so hastily and so quickly." That's the only advice I offer, because if you take one quarter of the generation capacity off line—let's go back to first principles—what would happen? You short the supply, you raise the price, right?

So the consumer now has this new, regulated purchase plan, the RPP, he's got the smart meter, and he's going to get whacked. The bill is going to go up, I predict—and maybe I could be proven wrong, and I hope I am. I'd say the average price is going to be—right now, it's four; it's going to be seven. That's almost a 100% increase. No question, it's going to be seven cents. "You've got to pay the real cost." That is the biggest—you've never, in Ontario, ever, ever, ever, since Adam Beck, paid the price of electricity. Never, ever. So the people of Ontario, get prepared. The Liberals know all. "Irrespective of what you do in your phone calls, we're going to charge you twice as much as you're paying today." Wait till the phones start ringing. Dwight Duncan will probably be shuffled off to health.

Interjection: I don't think he will.

Mr O'Toole: No, he'll be shuffled off—Donna will be put in charge, I think, because she's a reasonable person.

I'm quite serious. The people will respond. We did, as government. I can tell you, we blinked, and the reason we blinked is because this is a product unlike any other. Industry needs it. I've had pleas, and you're going to get them too, not just from General Electric or from the mining association or from the chemical or the forestry or the resource industry. About 50% of the cost of doing business in that sector is energy. What happens if the price goes up? The prices are set on the world market. They can't just pass that on to consumers, you know. So it's an economic issue. I've said from the beginning that most of the energy debate is an economic policy discussion. Adam Beck's plan was this—not power at cost. He believed it was part of the economy; it was an economic thing. Cheap power creates jobs. That's why we have all the steel plants in Ontario. That's why we

have all the manufacturing in Ontario. They use cheap power to create the economy. Those people worked, they paid tax, and the province got rich. Most other provinces don't have many manufacturing types of jobs or the infrastructure to support them. So if you don't think there's a relationship between the cost of power and the effects on the economy, then you're not paying attention.

If you look at the industries of the future, the current industries—for instance, technology and service and call centres and those things—huge consumers of power, there are the jobs. Frank McKenna of New Brunswick understood it. They also have one of the other nuclear plants, which is part of the generation discussion, as it could be described, because it will be a raging debate on the generation argument. If you eliminate coal, it's certainly a quarter, if not a third, of the generating capacity. If you eliminate nuclear, which is the baseload, which is probably at least 40%, some would say 50%, of the full capacity—in fact, it's almost all your baseload—you'll be starving to death in the dark, and extremely cold, because there will be no energy. You can't buy it from Manitoba; there's no grid to bring it in on. You can't bring it from Chicago or Ohio because there's a capacity of interconnect of about 4,000 megawatts.

So I don't think you'll complete this. It's not just a broken promise; it's mismanagement and poor administration. I'm saying to you, we as a government understood the problem. It was probably our nemesis at the end of the day. I would put to you—and I'm going to summarize because there's so much content here, so much material, that I have to have a break—that it will be one of the lead issues in the election in 2007 or 2008. The reason I say 2007 or 2008 is because the fixed-term election is a lot of bunk. You guys will have an election whenever you want. It's a Liberal promise; therefore, it means nothing.

So I say to you, there are going to be higher prices; there is going to be shorter supply. If you're in the dark, you'll lower the price, and if you're in the light, you won't be any brighter for it.

With that, I appreciate it. I'll be voting against this, obviously. It has been forced through, ill conceived and poorly managed by a government that deserves some time in the opposition.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I just want to make a couple of really quick points, because I know the NDP wanted to have some time to say a few words on this time allocation motion as well.

There was a quote I picked up that I thought was really interesting, and it's all to do with the rate relief for hydro users. It comes from someone named Dalton McGuinty on the Bill Carroll Show of November 13, 2002. That's about the time we capped the rates and promised that we'd keep those rates in place until 2006.

The question is, "If you're elected to the Premier's office tomorrow, Mr McGuinty, what do you do to fix the hydro situation as it is today?"

The answer from this guy, McGuinty: "First of all, we have to maintain rate relief for consumers. I have had the terrible responsibility to raise horror stories in the Legislature, people who have been put ... in a desperate position because they simply can't afford to pay their hydro. So we've got to maintain rate relief for our ratepayers."

1730

That comes from Dalton McGuinty on November 13, 2002. Exactly one year later, he lifted the cap. After this government voted in this House in favour of capping the rates to 2006, they broke a promise and lifted those rates. That's something I wanted to put on the record today.

The other comment I wanted to put on the record, very quickly, was the comment from—the other day, Mr Duncan, the Minister of Energy, talked about his great plan to close down the Lakeview coal-fired generation plant. I would invite anybody to talk to Mrs Elizabeth Witmer, who put that plan in place. Mrs Witmer has a huge picture in her office upstairs of her in front of the Lakeview plant, with a plan to close that plant by the spring of 2005—next April. It's Elizabeth Witmer's plan, and I couldn't believe that Dwight Duncan was actually trying to take credit for a plan that Elizabeth Witmer had put in place when she was the Minister of the Environment.

Interjection: Shameful.

Mr Dunlop: It is shameful that we have those kinds of activities in this House—people trying to take credit for other people's work. Not that a Liberal would do that, but Mr Duncan did that the other day.

When that plant does close next spring, I think it would be a shame if Elizabeth Witmer wasn't there to actually see the door closed on that plant. I wanted to put that on the record.

That's all I'm going to say for now. We have a few Qs and As, and I know the NDP wanted to say a few words as well.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Yes, this is the end of the debate. The Liberals at Queen's Park said, "No more. We won't have any more of this nonsense of debate," around some of the most contentious and dangerous legislation this province has ever witnessed: the legislation that paves the way for the wholesale, widespread privatization of electricity.

New Democrats have been clear and consistent. Howard Hampton, who is going to make an effort to use the few minutes allowed us—it's part of the government's design to ensure that the New Democrats weren't able to spend more than a few minutes in this debate. It's part of the government's design; we understand that.

Howard Hampton is the author of the book *Public Power*, which is still very much on the bookstands, whether it's Coles, Indigo, Chapters or independent book dealers. I encourage people to take a look at *Public Power* by Howard Hampton, because *Public Power* by Howard Hampton is the authoritative and current reference book on the history of electricity in this province, on the real dangers of privatization and on the need for us to re-embrace public, regulated electricity at cost in Ontario if we're going to have any luck at all in maintaining

industry in this province and the jobs associated with it; if we're going to have any luck at all in controlling electricity costs for residential consumers, whether it's young families already hard hit by downloaded new expenses or their folks and grandfolks as seniors living on fixed incomes.

I encourage folks to stay tuned in to the legislative channel, because Howard Hampton will be addressing this bill. It will be the final moments of debate. New Democrats are adamantly opposed to Bill 100, and the people of Ontario certainly are as well.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It was a very interesting speech we had from the member for Durham and the member for Simcoe North, talking about the real problem in hydro with electricity and the current program that the government is bringing down that's going to result very clearly in higher prices, as the members pointed out in their talk. It's going to result very clearly in a smaller supply of electricity that is Ontario-based, and we're going to be out around the rest of the continent begging for hydro or for electricity from our neighbours.

Closing the coal plants is something that really—I think everybody would like to see cleaner air. We would like to see the environment cleaned up, but it's something that has to be done over time. It's something that has to be done with balance in it. The supply of electricity in this province is something that requires a balance.

As the member for Durham pointed out, our atomic energy is the base of our supply. The only way you can make any money in an atomic plant is to run it full out all the time. It's not something you power up or down on short notice; it has to run all the time. So it makes good sense that the base power that we use 24 hours a day would be atomic power.

Hydro power from waterpower is something this province has a multitude of. Again, the members pointed out that maximizing that power is essential over time as well, so that we can use every bit of that hydro power that is available. The renewable resource powers that are coming on-line—wind power and solar power—those things are all fine, but they're not going to supply the bulk of power in this province at any time in the future.

Mrs Cansfield: Interestingly enough, not long ago I had a chance to talk to Dr David Suzuki, who told me a story about a young man who had come into the hospital with his parents. He had a respiratory disease; he had asthma. If you know anything about asthma, you know how frightening it is for a child. The fascinating thing was that Dr Suzuki said the parents had driven up in an SUV. They hadn't quite got it. They hadn't figured out that they were contributing to that child's disease and actually paying additional costs through their tax dollars to sustain a medical system. That disease has increased by over 600% in the last number of years.

There's no question about the need to close down coal-fired plants because, along with SUVs, they contribute to respiratory disease, which is significant. Whether one person dies, or 20, or 2,000, they are senseless deaths if they can be changed.

That's what this is about. This is about moving forward and looking at new ways of doing business; that's why alternative energy and renewables. You're right: Things are going to change. People are going to pay for their electricity. It isn't going to be, as I said, Chicken Little and the sky is falling, but there is no question that there will be an increased cost. But the fact of the matter is that the cost was there before; you just didn't know it. It was in the issue of a billion-dollar debt that somebody had to pick up and pay for.

Ms Wynne: Plus the health care costs.

Mrs Cansfield: Absolutely; plus the health care costs.

I think what's really important for us to keep this in perspective is that we need to move forward, because there is a real need to. When you talk about mismanagement, that renewable project that was done by the previous government was superb. The problem was, they stuck it on the shelf, along with a lot of other things that were stuck on the shelf.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the Chair recognizes the member from Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I do thank the members who engaged in this issue: Simcoe North, Niagara Centre, Halton and Etobicoke Centre. I'm looking for Mr Hampton's comments, and probably agree with about 12% of them.

The member for Etobicoke Centre really has come to this recently, and I understand that. She has a very good understanding, but there were a few things she said that frightened me. That's all the more reason why I'll be trying to recommend that this go to further hearings, because if you keep talking like that, trying to link this whole thing of the change in our economy—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: When you said, "Choose change," you were telling people to quit smoking—I agree with you—quit using SUVs—I agree with you—quit using coal plants, and there will be a few casualties.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Well, it could be the mining sector, the petrochemical sector.

With that profound a change there needs to be a broader dialogue with the people of Ontario. That's the point I'm making. I'm not in favour of anything that has adverse effects on someone's health, but just the tone I see here is that they have the right answers. They will find that life, like politics, is about choices. I think the more expeditious and more rational route is to take a fair-minded approach to this, to incent conservation, as I've suggested. If people save, then you should incent that.

If they had a real commitment here, they would be looking at renewable portfolio standards. But it's clear from the debate that they're going to force this bill through, they're going to raise the rates, they're going to threaten the shortage of supply of electricity, without any regard for the people in nursing homes, the people in retirement homes or the people in their very own homes. They will soon learn, I believe, that this product, like nothing else, is not that sensitive to price. You need a certain amount of the commodity to live. That's what this

discussion is about. It has to be a fair price and a reliable supply, and I don't think you can achieve that.

1740

Mr Hampton: In the few moments that remain, I want to say a few things about Bill 100. As I said earlier, I expect many people would be surprised to learn that the government is trying to ram this legislation through with one afternoon of debate on third reading. Many people at home may be saying to themselves, "Why would the government do that?" Let me suggest why they're doing it.

The first reason they're doing it is because this is a government that doesn't want the public of Ontario to know that their agenda for hydroelectricity is very much the same as the agenda of the previous Conservative government; that is, turn it over to the private sector. What that means—it doesn't matter if you look at the price here or if you look at the price in Alberta, in the United States, in Great Britain or in New Zealand—is at least an 18%, more likely a 20%, increase in the cost of electricity just through privatization.

A private company will want at least a 15% profit; they'll want the very large Bay Street salaries; they'll have higher costs of borrowing because they'll have a higher interest rate, and that all appears on the hydro bill. This government is still trying to do this by stealth, though; thus one of the reasons for trying to stampede this through without any debate.

The other reason they're trying to time-allocate this is that, for a government that went out there and was so holier than thou, more moral than the most moral about, "We're going to close down those coal-fired stations by 2007," it's obvious now that you don't have a plan to do that, and that you never, ever did have a plan to do that. So of course you want to shut down debate, because it's embarrassing.

I listened to the Minister of Energy in the scrum the other day trying to say to the media, "We'll just put them on standby," or, "We'll put them in reserve." People at home should know what that means. It means that when electricity usage starts to go up at around 6:30 or 7 in the morning, the coal plants will come on, and around 7 or 8 o'clock at night when electricity usage starts to go down, they'll be idled down. But you know what? That's pretty much what happens now. So there is no change here.

This has been a very embarrassing leak for the government. When I read the headlines in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Sun* and the *Toronto Star* the other day, you could see the Minister of Energy gritting his teeth, especially the headline from the *Toronto Sun*: "Duncan Warms to Coal." You could see him gritting his teeth. So this government wants to force this legislation through because they want to avoid that debate.

The McGuinty government has tried to make a big thing out of a little bit of wind energy, but what do we discover when we look at who is getting the contracts for the 300 or so megawatts of wind turbines? One Mike Crawley's name comes to mind. Who is Mike Crawley? Mike Crawley has done just about every job that a Liberal hack could do. If you read his resumé—all you

have to do is go to the federal Liberal Party's Web site and it's right there—he's counted paperclips and he's sharpened pencils, he's answered the phone and he's been the gofer for this and the gofer for that. He's made his living being a Liberal hack.

What is he going to get for his dedicated work as a Liberal hack? He's getting a \$475-million guaranteed hydro contract at 8 cents a kilowatt hour, wholesale price. People wonder why their hydro bill is going to go up. Let me tell you, your hydro bill is going to go up because the McGuinty government is going to be busy shovelling money into the back pocket of this Liberal hack.

If you go and look even at his own CV, it says that his other experience in life besides counting paperclips for the Liberal Party is some sales at the Bank of Commerce. Has this guy ever worked for an electricity company? No. Does he know how to put the plug-in in the wall? I doubt it. Has he got any experience working for an electricity company? No. He is a Liberal hack and he's going to get a \$475-million contract, guaranteed at 8 cents a kilowatt hour. That's why the hydro bill is going to go through the roof.

It doesn't end with him. Then there is Brascan, and I want people to know about Brascan. Brascan is the outfit that picked up for a song three hydro dams that used to be owned by the people of Ontario and produce electricity for about half a cent a kilowatt hour. Then, when the price of electricity went through the roof a couple of summers ago, they literally drained a lake to make money. In fact, the Sault Ste Marie Star has a picture, and what you see on either side of the picture is basically lake bottom. What you see sort of trickling down the middle of what was a lake is a little bit of water. That's after Brascan drained the lake. The natural environment doesn't matter. Fish and wildlife don't matter. The tourism industry didn't matter. All those people who owned cottages and tourist resorts didn't matter. Brascan was going to empty the lake to make money.

Who did this government give the other lion's share of the wind turbines to? Why, it's that incredibly environmentally responsible company, Brascan. Brascan has a horrible environmental record—drained a lake in pursuit of profits—and who does the McGuinty government give the lion's share of the wind turbine contracts to after the Liberal hacks have been at the trough? Brascan. That's why you're imposing time allocation to ram this legislation through: because that's embarrassing for you.

It is bigger than that. What I found really interesting was the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario—certainly not friends of New Democrats; they probably wouldn't want to be caught dead talking to New Democrats. The association of major power consumers are very, very clear on what's going on. In their brief they say that if you stack up the privatization of electricity under the McGuinty government, and then you stack up the Mike Crawleys, who get their \$475-million contracts, and then you stack up some of the other shenanigans, like the duplication now of private sector

bureaucracies and public sector bureaucracies, "For industry, the price of electricity is going to go up by at least 30%, more likely 50%." They're very clear about what is going to happen. Bowater paper came and said, "You're going to see more paper machines shut down. You're going to see more paper mills shut down." Steel companies came and said the same thing.

That is why we're seeing time allocation. The McGuinty Liberals are embarrassed by the hydro policy that they're trying to—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 2004, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr Duncan has moved third reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldeep	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Kwintore, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smith, Monique
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hampton, Howard	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Scott, Laurie
Dunlop, Garfield	Murdoch, Bill	Sterling, Norman W.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 15.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

It being after 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm.

The House adjourned at 1801.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East /	Horwath, Andrea (ND)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton-Est	
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	Boutrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		
	Prue, Michael (ND)		
Beaches-East York /		Hamilton West /	Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-York-Est		Hamilton-Ouest	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Springdale		Addington	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton Centre /	Jeffrey, Linda (L)		Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton-Centre		Huron-Bruce	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Milloy, John (L)
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga			
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands /	
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kingston et les îles	
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)		
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint		
Don Valley-Est	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)		
		Kitchener Centre /	
		Kitchener-Centre	
		Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
		Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
		Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
		Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
		London North Centre /	Matthews, Deborah (L)
		London-Centre-Nord	
		London West /	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
		London-Ouest	Ramal, Khalil (L)
		London-Fanshawe	Wong, Tony C. (L)
		Markham	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
		Mississauga Centre /	Fonseca, Peter (L)
		Mississauga-Centre	
		Mississauga East /	
		Mississauga-Est	Peterson, Tim (L)
		Mississauga South /	
		Mississauga-Sud	Delaney, Bob (L)
		Mississauga West /	
		Mississauga-Ouest	
		Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
		Niagara Centre /	Kormos, Peter (ND)
		Niagara-Centre	
		Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
		Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
		Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
		Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		
	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)		
Etobicoke Centre /			
Etobicoke-Centre			
Etobicoke North /	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)		
Etobicoke-Nord			
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 9 December 2004

Jeudi 9 décembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 décembre 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2004, on the amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 84, An Act to provide for fiscal transparency and accountability / Projet de loi 84, Loi prévoyant la transparence et la responsabilité financières.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate?

Shall the bill be now read a second time?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mr Sorbara for second reading of Bill 84, An Act to provide for fiscal transparency and accountability, be deferred until December 13, 2004."

Signed by the government whip.

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr Smitherman, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): The floor to the Deputy House Leader?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: No? Further debate? Is the parliamentary assistant here for any reply? No? OK.

The deputy House leader has moved second reading of Bill 124. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Mr Smitherman for second reading of Bill 124, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act, be deferred until Monday, December 13, 2004."

Signed by the government whip.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the business of the House for next week.

Monday, December 13: Government notice of motion 294 and government orders 10 to 21.

Tuesday, December 14: Bill 82 and Bill 96.

Wednesday, December 15: Bill 84, Bill 124 and Bill 17.

Thursday, December 16: Bill 106 and Bill 149.

Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm, Monday, December 13.

The House adjourned at 1855.

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First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

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Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 13 December 2004

Lundi 13 décembre 2004

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Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 13 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 13 décembre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CLARINGTON TRANSIT INITIATIVE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the community of Clarington, within my riding of Durham, in recognition of their recent public transit initiative. The municipality of Clarington is one at the leading edge of fuel efficiency and environmentally friendly transit technologies and is the first to use the Canadian-developed technology called hydrogen fuel injection, with the recent unveiling of three buses in my community.

Pioneering this new technology is Canadian Hydrogen Energy Co, which is located in the town of Bowmanville within my riding. Essentially, hydrogen fuel injection turns water into fuel savings and reduces emissions from buses within the municipality of Clarington. Steve Gilchrist, vice-president of government affairs of Bowmanville's Canadian Hydrogen Energy Co, predicts that the new system will result in a 15% to 25% improvement in bus fuel economy, and a 50% to 75% reduction in emissions. This new system is also economically efficient, whereby this new form of technology for buses pays for itself. Mr Gilchrist highlighted that the cost of installing the system on the bus is rapidly repaid in savings, within nine to 15 months. Clarington Mayor John Mutton also recognizes the many advantages of hydrogen fuel injection, including reduced emissions, diminishing fuel costs and fewer maintenance costs.

Clarington is closely considering the installation of this system in Durham's ambulances and other municipal vehicles. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the municipality of Clarington and Mayor John Mutton for their initiative, which also will serve as a benchmark for other local communities within the province looking to adopt cutting-edge technology in the area of public transit. The Minister of Energy should look into this project immediately.

EATING DISORDERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Today, Family and Friends against Disordered Eating, also known as FADE, is hosting a reception at Queen's Park. FADE is a non-

profit charity that includes sufferers, parents, professionals and concerned citizens who are lobbying for adequate and accessible services for eating disorders in Ontario.

Today, the three main forms of eating disorders are anorexia, bulimia and binge eating. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. This is particularly distressing when one considers that a recent Canadian survey of young women found that 37% of 11-year-olds, 42% of 13-year-olds and 48% of 15-year-olds believe they need to lose weight.

On November 25, I urged the Minister of Health to save two vital outpatient programs, located at the Toronto General Hospital, for adults suffering from eating disorders. The hospital was planning to cut educational and group therapy services that serve 200 patients and to reduce their day patient program, because the McGuinty Liberal government told them to balance their budget and these programs are not core services. At the time, the minister assured me he would review the matter to ensure these publicly funded services, which do not exist in the community, would remain available.

Last week, I found out that the Toronto General Hospital cancelled the outpatient groups, reduced the day hospital program and is finalizing the inpatient reductions. Staff are working reduced hours to avoid layoffs. I urge the Minister of Health to stop these cutbacks so that adults struggling with eating disorders can receive the support and services they desperately need.

HIGHWAY 3

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): The preliminary design and environmental assessment study on Highway 3 between Leamington and Windsor was begun in the fall of 1999. Five years later, this study hasn't been finished, and in fact has been further delayed. The final public information centre was supposed to be this fall. Now, it doesn't even show on the schedule and I'm not sure when it will be held. The final environmental clearance on this project was scheduled for the winter or spring of 2005, and with the recent delay I really have no idea when the final environmental clearance will be given.

Highway 3 from Windsor to Leamington is a highway on which the traffic grows day by day. That is a major route for automotive products, produce and flowers, which must be shipped to the United States on a just-in-time basis. On behalf of the constituents of the ridings of Essex and Chatham-Kent Essex, I urge the Minister of Transportation to address this study delay immediately.

It's imperative that we get on with the safety improvements and four-laning of Highway 3 from Leamington to Windsor.

UKRAINIAN ELECTION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): As we rise this week to celebrate the Christmas season with our families and friends, people in Ukraine will be fighting for democracy and a free society. I remember well when Viktor Yushchenko visited Ontario a couple of years ago. As the Ontario minister responsible for trade at that time, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet with him here at Queen's Park in May 2003. I told him then, as I'm sure members of the Legislature feel today, of our support for democracy and a fair, open and transparent election process, as well as expanded trade between Ukraine and Ontario.

The constitution of Ukraine limits the president to two consecutive five-year terms. This year's presidential elections take on particular importance for Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, after 10 years under President Leonid Kuchma.

On December 3, the supreme court of Ukraine annulled the recent presidential runoff election and called for another vote to be held on December 26, 2004. Tonight, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress is having a rally at Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto from 6 to 7 pm, in support of democracy in Ukraine. I will attend and I encourage members to do so. I commend the Ukrainian people for maintaining their protest peacefully and call on all members of this Legislature to show their support for the ongoing struggle in Ukraine.

EATING DISORDERS

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to highlight a particularly important issue, and that is eating disorders; in particular, anorexia nervosa and bulimia. Historically there's been a perception that these conditions affect affluent young women of particular backgrounds, but this in fact is not so. These disorders are a group of serious, long-term illnesses that affect a broad range of society. Eating disorders are a serious public health concern affecting up to 140,000 individuals across Ontario, young and old. And contrary to popular perception, they cut across boundaries of race, colour and socio-economic status.

We hear a great deal about obesity, yet we lose sight of those women and men who are dying to be thin. Previous administrations have neglected to identify this pressing issue, and we must not repeat this mistake.

I want to take a moment as well, on behalf of all members, to welcome FADE, Family and Friends Against Disordered Eating, who are well represented in the visitors' gallery today. I would also invite all members to attend a reception hosted by FADE this evening. Many of these individuals have family members or friends who are gravely ill and undergoing treatment

as we speak. On their behalf, I ask all members to recognize their presence here as well as their hard work for this very worthy cause.

1340

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Who breaks promises better than Dalton McGuinty? Nobody. In the 2003 campaign, Dalton McGuinty loaded up his warehouse with campaign promises of every size, shape and model. The theme was, "You want a campaign promise, you got a campaign promise"—in fact, 230 of them. But what they didn't tell you was that all their campaign promises were specially made just to be broken.

Over this past year, we have seen a fire sale of broken promises, with about 40 broken promises already hoisted upon the unsuspecting public. Do you want a tax freeze? Dalton sold you a tax freeze, but the warranty ran out only a few months later with the biggest tax hike in the history of this province. Do you want better health care? Well, I hope you didn't buy that one, because the small print in the contract has now been revealed: two-tier health care for chiropractic care, physiotherapy and optometry, despite a punishing new health tax. Stability in the health system: When you took off the fancy packaging, you found a belligerent health minister who has launched a three-front health battle with doctors, volunteer hospital boards and CUPE.

If you didn't like those 231 promises, they've got more for you, a whole bunch of promises you never dared to dream of: sushi bans, pit bull eradications and bicycle helmets every time you go out the door.

Who breaks promises better than Dalton McGuinty? Nobody.

HIGHWAY CLOSURES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As we swiftly enter the winter driving season in Ontario, especially in the northern parts of the province, it is inevitable that we'll see a number of highway closures over the next several months. Aside from the obviously heightened danger drivers face on snow-covered, icy roads, there is frequently an enormous inconvenience when conditions close down a highway for any period of time. This becomes even more challenging in the north, when often no alternate routes exist for travellers needing to reach their destinations; all the more reason it is absolutely vital that the Ministry of Transportation 1-800 lines, which are set up to alert drivers of rapidly changing conditions, must be accurate and quick in providing this information to the public.

I bring this up because there have been instances recently when this vital service was simply not available in a timely fashion. This past October, torrential rains in the Thunder Bay district caused several road closures between Thunder Bay and Schreiber. While the Ministry of Transportation did an outstanding job of getting the

roads reopened as quickly as possible, there was much frustration as stranded drivers could not access up-to-date information from the ministry's 1-800 lines, simply because it wasn't there. At a recent public meeting held in Schreiber shortly after the road washouts, Mayor Don McArthur told me it was in fact the number one issue brought up.

There is no argument that the ministry's priority during a road closure must be to get it reopened as soon as possible. However, whether it's a snowstorm, a washout or a traffic accident, it's vital that the ministry provide accurate information to the public on a priority basis as well. That is why the system was put in place. Certainly the public has a right to expect it to be there when they most need it.

PICKERING AIRPORT

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I rise today to speak about the recent release by the Greater Toronto Airports Authority of a draft plan report for a potential regional reliever airport in Pickering. After over three years of technical studies and extensive community consultation, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority has compiled a comprehensive report which sets out a concept for an airport that could be developed over the next 30 years or more to ensure the air transportation needs of the greater Toronto area continue to be met.

When the planning process was initiated in 2001, along with other community members, was invited to be part of that process. This has been instrumental in shaping the evolution of this airport planning process, which is expected to move into the environmental assessment phase early next year.

While it is clear that there are neither funds nor the desire for unnecessarily duplicating airport facilities within the greater Toronto area, there is a need for long-term protection for additional capacity at an appropriate site. While extensive expansion has taken place at Pearson airport and there remains growth potential for Hamilton airport, there will be a need for an airport in the east to serve as a regional reliever that will complement Hamilton's role to the west.

I'm sure all members, especially members from Durham and York regions, would concur that an airport in Pickering would represent an economic development opportunity not only for these two regions, but for the province of Ontario. After 30 years of uncertainty in Pickering, it is appropriate that this comprehensive planning process proceed to the next stage, a thorough panel environmental assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

I commend the GTA for leading this inclusive initiative, and I wish them well.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): When we came into office a year ago, we were faced

with a mess: huge hospital deficits, a growing list of underserved communities, wait times that were too long, nurses and doctors fleeing the province because the government didn't care, long-term-care homes going uninspected, and the residents being neglected.

We're turning the ship around and producing real results for Ontarians. We're helping hospitals balance their budgets with \$1 billion given to hospitals since we took office. We've invested in 2,400 full-time nursing positions and introduced a comprehensive nursing strategy last week. We have restored standards in our long-term-care homes, are hiring more staff, and are treating our seniors with the dignity and respect they deserve.

We have a plan to encourage doctors to work in teams so that one million Ontarians who don't have access to a family doctor are served better. We have unveiled a comprehensive wait time strategy to reduce wait times for cataract surgery, cancer care, cardiac care, hip and knee joint replacements, and MRI scans. We have brought on nine new MRI machines.

We are providing home care for 21,000 more Ontarians who need it. We have invested in community mental health for the first time in 12 years. We are reversing the downloading of public health because we don't think a provincial government should ever turn its back on protecting the public health of Ontarians. And we have increased support to community health services like Meals on Wheels.

It has been a year of change and a year that has produced real health care results for people in Ontario, because if our health care system isn't working for people, it simply isn't working.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the following motion: that this Legislature strike a standing committee on education, as promised by the Premier, which will be empowered to consider and report to the House its observations, opinions and recommendations on the effectiveness of education funding provided by the Ministry of Education. The committee shall produce an annual report.

That would be my motion.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Trinity-Spadina has moved unanimous consent. Do I have unanimous consent? No.

VISITORS

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rise to recognize the parents of the great page Nicholas Kimchuk from Hamilton West, who are here with his twin brother in the gallery today. I welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It's going to be one of those days—a point of order which is not a point of order.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce Greg Olszowka and Mark Bannister, tobacco farmers of Tobacco Farmers In Crisis.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm delighted to introduce to you a former page who thinks this is the most exciting place in Ontario—and he says he's ready to take over my job in 2015—Grant Gonzales.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2004

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2004

Mr Sorbara moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 / Projet de loi 160, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2005.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): This legislation, which is commonly referred to as the Supply Act, is the formal approval of this Legislature of all the money that's spent by the government of Ontario over the fiscal year. This follows the process, first, of the budget, then of the standing committee on estimates, and finally the concurrence by this assembly of the estimates process that has been done by the estimates committee.

The bill gives the government the authority to spend money in accordance with the estimates and is part of our plan for a stronger economy and major investments in health care and education.

DOG OWNERS' LIABILITY AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES PROPRIÉTAIRES DE CHIENS

Mrs Munro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to amend the Dog Owners' Liability Act / Projet de loi 161, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des propriétaires de chiens.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): This bill outlines a vicious dog, one that has been responsible for severe physical injury, and then outlines the penalties for the owner in a way that might include, as well as a fine, a ban on owning a dog.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS' LICENCES), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PERMIS DE CONDUIRE POUR AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES)

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to requirements for drivers' licences for school buses / Projet de loi 162, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement aux exigences à respecter pour obtenir un permis de conduire pour autobus scolaires.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On February 12, 2004, Allyceea Ennis was a four-year-old who was found in a dangerous situation on a bus. As a consequence, this bill attempts to amend the licensing procedures for persons driving a school bus so that they be required to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation/first aid training.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACTION PLAN

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm proud to inform my colleagues in the Legislature that this morning the Premier and I announced our government's wide-ranging plan to build strong communities where women and children in Ontario can live free from the threat of domestic violence.

Our domestic violence action plan is a comprehensive, community-based approach that reflects the suggestions and recommendations we heard in our consultations with front-line workers and experts on domestic violence. They told us that the plan should rebalance services to strengthen community-based services, address the need for education and training for people who work in domestic violence, and get involved in long-term prevention to reduce violence.

That's what we've done. Our plan addresses four key areas. It talks about community supports, training, public education and prevention, and justice.

First, on the topic of community supports, the plan provides \$56 million for a broad range of community based supports to help abused women get to safety protect themselves from more humiliation and pain, and move on to rebuild their lives. We're increasing funding for shelters, counselling and housing supports. We're working with the violence-against-women sector to improve services for children who have witnessed or experienced abuse. We're funding community agencies to hire staff to increase their capacity for fundraising and become more financially independent.

Secondly, the plan includes \$5.9 million to address the need for training to help professionals and service providers recognize early signs of abuse—people such as emergency room doctors, nurses, teachers—and to help people who have informal contact with abused women at points where early protection and intervention are crucial, like family, like friends, like neighbours. We want them to be well prepared to offer the appropriate information and supports if they suspect a woman is being abused. Domestic violence could happen anywhere in our community. We all have a responsibility to protect women and children at risk.

Thirdly, our plan involves a \$4.9-million multi-faceted public education and prevention campaign. This campaign will include television advertising, Web-based information, resources for schools and pilot projects in communities.

One groundbreaking component of the campaign will, for the first time, target young people aged eight to 14 years. Experts believe that the major root cause of violence against women is the inequality of boys and girls from a very young age. We want to change attitudes and behaviours early and urge young people to break the cycle of violence. This morning, we had an opportunity to see some video clips of young girls just talking amongst themselves and the language they hear from those around them that encourages that kind of inequality. That's the cycle that we are determined to break. We want to motivate them to abandon the code of conduct that promotes gender stereotypes and inequality, and we want to challenge them to be the generation that ends violence against women.

Fourth, the action plan strengthens the justice system response to domestic violence, and we heard this throughout our consultations. This is our government's absolute commitment: Domestic violence will not be tolerated. May I say we will always be tough on abusers. We will evaluate and improve our domestic violence courts. We intend to review and propose an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to require the courts to consider domestic violence when making orders relating to the custody of, or access to, a child. We'll improve civic protections for abused women, including improvements on restraining orders and enforcement of breaches.

We are working across the government to better coordinate the many policies and programs that are contained within these four components of the domestic violence action plan. That's why I continue to chair a steering committee of 13 cabinet ministers, whose mandate is to lead the development and monitor the implementation of the plan.

Our plan also brings together a wide range of partners to improve public awareness, change attitudes and help break the cycle of violence. At this morning's announcement, we had over 50 groups come together to partner with us on our public education campaign, because domestic violence is everyone's concern. We all share a responsibility for the protection and safety of women in abusive situations. As a society, we must ensure that

women and their children can live freely and violence-free in their homes. Our work will continue until the violence ends.

I'm proud to be associated with a government that sees domestic violence as a priority and with a Premier who is committed to better protecting women and children who leave their homes in fear of violence.

Today was a great day. We were so pleased to have our ministers attending and the people who will help us effect this plan. In the end, we said, "All of us are responsible for ending domestic violence."

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

1400

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I am pleased to rise on behalf of our party and respond to the minister's announcement today. Although we certainly support the action taken by this government on domestic violence, it does fall well short of the government's election promises, which included: (1) an amendment to the Employment Standards Act to allow victims to take unpaid time off from work so that they can attend court proceedings involving the crime committed against them; (2) increased support to the provincial network of sexual assault centres so they can launch and expand awareness campaigns in high schools, universities and colleges; (3) expanded access to testing for date-rape drugs so that women who have been assaulted can go to their sexual assault centre, family doctor or local hospital and get the information they need; and, most importantly, (4) this government's commitment to pass, within the first year of government, strong victims' rights legislation that will ensure that victims have access to information and services such as dates for bail hearings and notification of when offenders are released back into the community.

Regrettably, the Liberal government has broken yet another promise by not passing a strong victims' rights legislative bill in their first year, as they promised. And for the record, it's important to note that it was our government that introduced and passed the Domestic Violence Protection Act on December 21, 2000, almost four years ago.

Having said this, women's advocates are already criticizing today's announcement. According to a story put out by Canadian Press shortly after the announcement, "People who run shelters for abused women in Ontario are less than impressed with a new government strategy to combat domestic violence."

"Some of the money will be used to help shelters become better fundraisers, which critics say is the wrong approach."

"Eileen Morrow of the Association of Interval and Transition Houses says shelters need guaranteed government funding, and notes they already compete with hospitals for local support."

"She says shelters should be the heart and soul of any plan that stops violence against women."

"Activist Pam Cross says it's insulting for the government to suggest women's shelters need help learning to

connect with their communities to become better fund-raisers.”

So already we can see that the announcement today certainly fell short of what had been anticipated.

But I want to move to another area related to violence where this government has fallen so short, and that is bullying. We know, and the minister has reiterated the fact, that boys and girls who witness or experience violence in the home are at high risk of becoming victims and/or abusers later in life. If we take a look at the recent articles in our newspapers, we can see that this government has done nothing this past year in protecting our children from bullying. In fact, some of these children have committed suicide because of a lack of any support. I say to this government, if you are to build the strong communities that you say you want, children should have the right to live free of fear and violence not just in their homes, but in their schools and their communities. I would also say that we all share the responsibility for the protection and safety of children in bullying situations. We need to place a new emphasis on preventing abuse before it happens and supporting victims when it does.

I was appalled to read in the *Toronto Sun* this weekend that Rachel Reid, a 14-year-old grade 9 Mississauga student, fearing for her life because she had already been assaulted at her school, swarmed and threatened with being “knifed to death,” has chosen to live now with her grandparents in Sarnia rather than risk returning to the school and the scene of the bullying. This same article continued that according to a Peel police search of its database, the school has called the police and they have gone there on a regular basis. In fact, from the beginning of the school year last September up until last Monday, there were 113 incidents at the school requiring police attention.

And let’s remember the death of Joshua Melo, 15 years old, who killed himself on November 26, after, according to his family, he was bullied. That was at Strathroy District Collegiate Institute.

I would say to this government, no child should have to move away from his home. I would encourage this Minister of Education to take action. He’s had over a year to do so. Instead, you focus on eliminating teacher evaluation and on bring-your-own-bottle-of-beer to the restaurant, rather than making sure our children can be protected from violence and abuse.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I’m happy to respond, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, to the minister’s announcement. I listened with interest to the announcement this morning, and I have to tell the minister and the government that they did put on a very fine show. But unfortunately, the four-year plan provides very little help to women already experiencing abuse to break that cycle of violence.

There have been two high-profile coroners’ inquests about domestic violence, conducted for the public interest, that have been followed by reports like *Walking on Eggshells*, which I have here, with a lot of recommendations that have not been followed up.

The strategy falls short of implementing the core recommendations, echoed by all these various reports, that strengthening women’s economic and social positions must be the centrepiece of any plan to break the cycle of violence against women and children. That means women must have access to adequate social and economic supports in the form of affordable housing, second-stage housing, income supports, daycare and employment protection so they can leave abusive homes and rebuild their lives. These reports have all called for such actions so women do not have to make the tragic choice between impoverishment and staying in an abusive relationship.

Let’s talk about housing for a minute. There remains an acute shortage of safe places to go. Women’s shelters are filled to capacity, and second-stage and affordable housing that women need are indeed in very short supply because of the cuts. The lack of housing options is among the two top reasons that make women in shelters return to the violent setting they tried to escape. It is reported that 90% of shelters know women who often, or most of the time, were making the decision to stay with or return to violent situations because of the lack of affordable housing available to them.

Let’s talk about shelters. Today, Ontario’s emergency shelters did not receive the sustained, adequate, stable funding as recommended by the Hadley inquest and women’s advocacy groups. For years, shelters have had to turn women away because they are filled to capacity, like the Three Oaks shelter, which had to turn away 268 women and children last year. Instead, today’s shelters were given funds for fundraising training, effectively sending the message that emergency shelters are left on their own to deal with the bed and program shortages.

Minister, this was really alarming, and OAITH and all the people in women’s shelters are very upset. They feel like you threw them to the wolves today. They’re being asked to compete with all those others out there, like hospitals, which are out fundraising like crazy, particularly in smaller locations up north and around the province. They do not have the capacity to fundraise any more, since the previous government cut funding to the women’s shelters. They have been fundraising, as has the second-stage housing. This government, in opposition and in the election campaign, promised to totally re-fund the programs in existing second-stage housing and then changed the terminology, changed the language, gave \$3.5 million—that was announced a little while ago and reannounced today—which is not going to the programs in second-stage housing, as promised, but has been spread very thinly across the province for all kinds of new programs, which of course we don’t object to; we need far more than what the government announced today.

Then there is the promise the Liberals made to build 20,000 new affordable housing units, but there are still no shovels in the ground.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: There still are not.

Their federal cousins have given \$300 million in funds for affordable housing, and it is the provincial Liberals who are holding up the construction. The \$300 million is gathering dust in a bank account instead of being used to build housing for 150,000 Ontarians. This has to change. We need to see that housing being built right away.

Then there is second-stage housing. I appeal to this government again today to keep its promise to provide adequate, stable funding for first aid shelters and to keep their promise to provide all the funding they promised for second-stage housing in this province. It is so badly needed.

DEFERRED VOTES

FISCAL TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 84, An Act to provide for fiscal transparency and accountability / Projet de loi 84, Loi prévoyant la transparence et la responsabilité financières.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1410 to 1415.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Oraziotti, David
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve

Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takharr, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

Nays

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn
Flaherty, Jim

Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm

Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilson, Jim

Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank

Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael

Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? There was a no.

To which committee would you like this bill to be referred?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): It should be ordered for third reading.

The Speaker: There was a no, and I asked which committee it should be referred to.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Legislative Assembly, sir.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

May I just state again: Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? So ordered.

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 124, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1420 to 1425.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marchese, Rosario
Marsales, Judy
Martel, Shelley
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Oraziotti, David
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard

Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Gregory S.
Takharr, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Flaherty, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry

Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie

Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 70; the nays are 19.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? So ordered.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Deputy Premier. This session has been marked by more broken McGuinty promises, a lack of candour, serious questions about the competency of your government and no answers in this House. Deputy, I want to revisit some serious questions we raised about the McGuinty "pay more, get less" health care scheme. We didn't get an answer 28 days ago, and surely you have one now.

Last September, in the midst of the election campaign, Dalton McGuinty went to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and signed a pledge that he wouldn't raise taxes. Once in government, he introduced a \$2.4-billion-a-year tax hike under the guise of a health care premium. The CTF launched a lawsuit against the Premier for breaking his signature promise. Why did Dalton McGuinty spend taxpayers' dollars to defend the indefensible in court, namely his political reputation?

1430

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the opportunity the honourable member provides to remind him of what Ontarians all across this province know: An unprecedented investment in community-based health care services is underway.

What Ontarians know is that there's a party in government in the province of Ontario that's spending \$700 million more in our hospitals this year than they planned to; that we're spending \$103 million to enhance the capacities of home care; that we're spending \$191 million to significantly improve the quality of care for our most vulnerable in long-term-care facilities; that we're working very hard to enhance primary care in a fashion which addresses the cruel reality of those two parties while in government: that under their watch community after community in Ontario was declared underserved from the standpoint of the necessary primary care resources.

Our government is going to be the one that reverses the terrible trend that they collectively created.

Mr Runciman: I think Ontarians are getting sick and tired of this flim-flam act: 28 days to get an answer, and we still don't get an answer.

I have another issue that wasn't answered before under Dalton McGuinty's "pay more, get less" health scheme. Mr McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes; we know he did. First you called it a premium. Then, unions started insisting employers pay the premium to their employees, so you clarified what it was all along: a tax hike.

You signed a pledge that you would have a referendum on any new tax increase, but then in May you said you wouldn't have a referendum on this \$900-per-person-per-year tax hike. We first asked you this question 27 days ago. Surely, with your high-priced staff, you will have an answer by now. Why won't you hold a referendum on your punishing McGuinty health tax as you originally promised?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member dares to stand in his place and talk about the high-priced staff that I have, when he was part of a party that paid the communications guy Gord Haugh a fantastic \$300,000 a year.

This is the evidence the honourable member presents: that he stands as a member of a party which has not yet accepted a very clear reality, and that is, on their watch, in their last budget, they all gathered up in Brampton and concocted a great big myth. It was the myth of a balanced budget.

The reality is that our party, barely more than one year in government in the province of Ontario, is overseeing a transformation of the health care system to put more resources at the community level, to make our hospitals more efficient and to save them from the challenges that they're asked to provide through 12 years of lack of investment at the community level. This is the evidence that we're working to build community services and a health care system that works as a continuum of care. That honourable member is still living in the lack-of-reality time of the Magna budget.

Mr Runciman: This minister is not only a bully, but he's clearly a blowhard. We're getting a double-B here.

I have another question—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is that language unparliamentary?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It's too early into question period for us to be using words that may offend each other. So could you just complete your final supplementary?

Mr Runciman: It's simply a very accurate description. I'm sorry if I offended anyone.

I have another question that we first raised 42 days ago that went unanswered, and we're certainly not getting any answers today. As justification for your broken promises on tax hikes, you said wait times would

fall as a result of your McGuinty health tax. Then your own wait times expert, Dr Hudson, said that you won't even be able to measure wait times until the end of your government's term. Worse, he said that you can't guarantee that we'll get the waiting times down by then.

Minister, this is quickly becoming characteristic of your government's "pay more, get less" health care plan. You make promises before the election, only to break them after, and then you don't have the parts to provide any answers as to why. It begs only one question: Who's better at breaking health care promises? Nobody.

Interjections: No-o-o-o-o-body.

The Speaker: Order. Give it up. May I ask the members to come to order. Those who have not given up theirs, whenever they show them again, will automatically be withdrawn from the House.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I dare say the people of Ontario would probably feel quite strongly that it's those members who are best suited to the striped suit, after what they did to the people of the province. The only thing that surprises me a little is that, building on the Bad Boy theme, they haven't also moved along to using the little monkey instead.

This is the party that just voted against fiscal responsibility. This is the party led by John Tory—peek-a-boo—who, when asked about fiscal responsibility on CFRB on September 28, said, "I think that's a very good idea."

The member talked about wait times. Tomorrow we'll have an opportunity to expand on our announcement of \$107 million to enhance access to key services for Ontarians: hips and knees, cardiac, cancer and cataracts; more access to MRIs and CT scans—a 20% increase over a period of 18 months. These are the real actions of a government that's committed to more than the flim-flammy of their props.

NURSES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I have a question to the Minister of Health. It concerns your broken promises on health care. Minister, you and Dalton McGuinty promised to increase the number of hospital beds in Ontario and you and Dalton McGuinty promised to hire 8,000 net new nurses. Yet, this past session, you and every member of the Liberal caucus voted against a resolution asking that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government to guarantee that no nurses will be laid off and no hospital beds will be closed over the course of the mandate of the McGuinty government.

I have a very simple question; I'd like to ask why you and every Liberal MPP voted against this resolution to help you keep your own promise.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member asks a question about nurses. The fact of the matter is that in 12 or 13 months as a government, we've enhanced by more than 2,000 the number of full-time nursing positions in Ontario: \$25 million invested in our smallest hospitals,

and a further \$25 million invested in our largest hospitals, to create more than 1,200 positions; 600 positions alone in our recent announcement with respect to long-term care; 200 new nurses hired through our \$103-million investment in home care; and last week, 1,000 positions created for new nursing grads to give them the practical experience on the front lines of health care, to enhance their skills and make sure they are job-ready, to provide the necessary care and treatment to the people of Ontario. That is a record of success, and we will continue to build on it. We will fulfill that commitment toward 8,000 new nurses in Ontario.

1440

Mr Baird: I say to the minister, another day and another bunch of broken Liberal promises by this minister and by Dalton McGuinty. You and your government feel accountable to no one. Day after day after day, you come into this House and feel it's unnecessary to answer even the most basic question. We've been asking you these same questions for months, and you refuse to give us answers on why you're refusing to keep promises that you made to people in the province of Ontario in the last election.

I say to the minister, you and your party promised to hire 8,000 net new nurses. Yet right across this province, hospitals are making plans to lay off nurses and health care workers who are absolutely essential to keeping our hospitals running and patients well served.

You say, when we bring up these concerns, that we're fearmongering. You say it won't happen. Minister, you and every Liberal MPP voted against an opposition motion that would guarantee that no nurses would be laid off in the province of Ontario.

Will you stand in your place and, before you announce your response to those 65 reports calling for nursing lay-offs in the province of Ontario, guarantee that no nurses will be laid off during your time as Minister of Health? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member has got himself twisted into such a fury to support nurses that he forgot one important fact: He was part of a government that called nurses Hula Hoops, that pronounced them redundant. He's part of a party that just voted against fiscal transparency, and now he stands to make all those claims.

The reality is, as I mentioned in my earlier answer, that we have already provided new full-time opportunities for thousands of nurses in Ontario. As we seek to continue to transform health care, build up our community sector and free up our hospitals to do the things that only they can do, we will continue to make the necessary investments to provide the care that Ontarians desire. That is our challenge. That is what we will deliver.

That honourable member cannot absent himself from one very clear reality: He was part of a government the leader of which said, "It is not our plan to close hospitals."

Mr Baird: Minister, the people of Ontario are watching. They listen to your rhetoric, but they watch your

actions. You and every Liberal MPP stood in your place and voted against a resolution calling for no nurses to be laid off in the province of Ontario. This House will adjourn on Thursday, and you have 65 reports on your desk from hospitals that are saying they're going to have to lay off nurses and other important health care workers. We want a guarantee that they won't be laid off.

Let's look at what this means around the province. In Chris Bentley's riding, the London Health Sciences Centre is planning to lay off 580 nurses and health care workers. In Jeff Leal's riding, the Peterborough Regional Health Centre is planning on closing 46 beds. In Dalton McGuinty's riding, the Ottawa Hospital has plans to lay off hundreds of nurses and close hundreds of beds.

I have a simple and direct question for you. You are the Minister of Health; will you stand in your place and guarantee that no nurses will be laid off in the province of Ontario on your watch? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: This is a member of the party whose then leader and Premier, Mike Harris, said, "It is not my plan to close hospitals." What happened to the Wellesley Hospital? Closed. What happened to the Riverside hospital? Closed. What happened to Doctors Hospital? Closed. The fact is, that honourable member has no credibility except a more than eight-year legacy of stewardship for our health care system. The end result of that was what? The people of the province of Ontario spoke. They said to you, "Gone."

In response, this government, barely more than one year in office, is involved in making the single largest investments in community-based care, more than \$2 billion in additional resources this year for the Ontario health care system. We will continue to deliver on those excellent investments.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question for the Minister of Community and Social Services: One of the biggest disappointments with the McGuinty government is your failure to keep your promise to stop the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. The supplement is supposed to put money into the pockets of the most vulnerable Ontario families so they can pay the rent, put food on the table and put clothes on their children's backs.

Minister, why have you broken your promise? Why is the McGuinty government continuing to take \$200 and \$300 a month out of the pockets of the lowest-income Ontario families?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm very happy to address this issue. Let me say first that we have to start by telling the facts. The fact is that for the first time in 12 years, people on social assistance have seen a 3% increase in their rates. That's the first time that has happened in 12 long years.

Let me say also that from the moment we became the government, we immediately stopped the new funding

from the federal government that is in the form of the national child benefit, and it has remained with the families. That's a total of \$7 million. That's \$117 million more staying with families.

We've also talked to people across Ontario about what the needs of families are. What they've told us is that money they've used from this national child benefit funding has developed programs to reach children at risk.

Mr Hampton: According to the McGuinty government, if you put \$3 a month into the pockets of the lowest income and you take \$300 a month out, that's progress.

Last week, everyone was impressed by "Honest Deb" Peliti, who returned the \$40,000 that she found on the street. When the Premier met her in the hallway, she gave Dalton McGuinty a very clear message. She looked the Premier in the eye and said, "Say what you mean and mean what you say"; in other words, keep your promises.

Minister, you promised a big announcement on social assistance reform before Christmas. My question is this: Will you finally say what you mean and mean what you say, and end your regressive and unfair clawback of the national child benefit from the poorest families in Ontario?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I'd like to thank the member for bringing Mrs Peliti into this House; I was very pleased to see that. It was a moment where this House collectively agreed that those were the kinds of stories we'd like to hear about every day. The Premier especially appreciated meeting her and her children.

Mrs Peliti came here not understanding whether she would be able to keep the \$2,000 reward. What we made very clear is that in today's Liberal government, when we work with our municipal partners on how they deploy the rules on social assistance, we have discretion at the local level. It was there in the last government as well, but under the last Tory government, the last decision they would have made would have been to allow her to actually keep that reward money; that's different.

We are here for helping people. We will do all we can to continue to help families like Mrs Peliti and her children.

Mr Hampton: Deb Peliti is a very honest person and her directions were very clear: "Say what you mean and mean what you say." Why is that so difficult for the McGuinty government?

Before the election, you said, "We will end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement." You said, "The clawback is wrong, and we will end it." But Deb Peliti and her children have \$200 or \$300 a month taken out of their pockets because the McGuinty government doesn't keep its promise. She simply says, "Say what you mean and mean what you say."

I ask the question again, Minister. Will you finally end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement or will this continue to be another McGuinty broken promise?

Hon Ms Pupatello: Let me tell the member opposite this, to be clear: We have said from the beginning that \$42 million of this clawback goes directly to municipi-

palities that have developed programs for children at risk, that help all of these same families. These same municipalities are now asking us not to end the clawback, because they desperately need this funding.

On the other hand, the \$160 million that comes back to the provincial government is going forward to fund the Ontario child tax credit.

I appreciate that the NDP members here have no respect for low-income Ontarians who want the tax credit. However, we have serious decisions to make to account for \$202 million and determine what is in the best interests of low-income Ontarians. Do we help with the child tax credit? Do we cancel all of these programs for children at risk? Our children's minister has undertaken a review of all of those programs, and we will come to a decision—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you, Minister. New question.

1450

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Health: It's very clear that the McGuinty government never meant what it said when it talked about the clawback and it never meant what it said on health care. Dalton McGuinty promised better health care. Instead, the McGuinty scheme is pay more, get less health care.

You've whacked low- and modest-income people in Ontario with a regressive and unfair tax; you've cut important health services like chiropractic services, physiotherapy services and eye care; you've bullied hospitals into cutting hospital services, beds and jobs; and now you've finally botched your deal with Ontario doctors. So I say to the minister, why didn't the McGuinty government mean what it said on health care?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate that the honourable member gives me another opportunity to list off so many more of the accomplishments we've made with respect to the investments that we're making all across the Ontario health care system.

Earlier, I mentioned long-term care: 191 million new dollars. I mentioned home care: \$103 million for home care for 21,000 additional clients served this year. Community-based health care: the first investment in 12 years, of \$65 million. Operation Health Protection for Ontario public health: increased public health spending from \$273 million this year to \$469 million in 2007-08. Some \$600 million to create 150 family health teams to address the fact, sir, that when you were in government, you just shut medical schools. Nurses—I've mentioned before—more than 2,000 new jobs created.

Already, there's evidence all across the province of Ontario that this government is seeking to redress so much of what they started and what they came forward with. We will enhance those quality services. That's the commitment that we've made.

Mr Hampton: The only evidence is the evidence that the McGuinty government has become the health care grinch for ordinary Ontarians while you now play Santa Claus to the banks and insurance companies.

A single mom with an income of \$30,000 will pay 24% more in income taxes as a result of the McGuinty health tax. Meanwhile, what are you doing for those poor, impoverished banks and insurance companies? Why, they get a capital tax gift that's going to amount to hundreds of millions of dollars a year—those poor banks that have a \$13-billion profit margin this year.

My question, Minister, is, how do you justify the McGuinty “pay more, get less” health care, while you play Santa Claus to the banks and insurance companies?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member voted against Bill 2, which ended corporate tax cuts. His inconsistency on this matter is so well established. Then again, his inconsistency is generally well established.

The honourable member likes to talk about a single parent. The fact of the matter is that one of the initiatives we're most proud of is that we've expanded access to immunization, which will mean that for many, many parents, they'll save \$600 per child just through an enhancement to our immunization strategy.

I want to say that with respect to wait times, we're moving forward in a fashion that is designed to shorten lists and to address some of those chronic challenges which have been there for too long. These are the things that we ran on: enhancing access to wait times for hips and knees, for cardiac, for cancer, for cataracts and for MRI/CT.

The reality is that it was that party, while in office, that cut spending for health care. The reality is that our record is clear—a more than \$2-billion investment this year alone.

Mr Hampton: Here's the reality, Minister. Ordinary people who need to get access to a chiropractor and don't have the income now either do without or try to find somewhere else to cut. Ordinary Ontarians who need to see a physiotherapist, particularly low- and modest-income Ontarians, either do without or have to cut something else. People who need to see an eye doctor—and it's true virtually across Ontario—either cut something else out of their budget to see the optometrist or do without. Meanwhile, the McGuinty government is giving those poor, impoverished banks and insurance companies a capital tax break that amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

I ask the question again: How does the McGuinty government justify “pay more, get less” health care for ordinary Ontarians while you look after banks and insurance companies?

Hon George Smitherman: The honourable member likes to speak about ordinary Ontarians, but what he doesn't like to fess up to is the fact that a whole bunch of ordinary Ontarians, numbering about a million, don't have access to basic primary care in their local neighbourhoods and communities because his party, while in

office, decided that the appropriate strategy was to close medical schools and stop the production line of doctors.

What the honourable member also doesn't like to speak about is that this government has put a significant amount of the resources of the people of Ontario behind the renewal of family practice, behind family health teams. We're going to develop 150 of them, the first 45 this year, to deliver care to more than 2.5 million Ontarians, the most basic kind of care that people require for the ordinary Ontarians that the member likes to talk about. But the member doesn't like to live up to his record and his legacy, a very cruel one, which is to have prevented a million people from having access to the most basic medical care.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): My question is to the Minister of Health. My riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock is struggling with fewer doctors than it needs to deliver health care, and our local situation is becoming worse each month because of your failed McGuinty health scheme. The city of Kawartha Lakes is barely coping, with 15 fewer doctors than it needs. In January, a doctor in Minden is retiring and the clinic might close, orphaning thousands more patients.

My riding has the second-highest population of seniors in the province. These frail and elderly people have the highest need for health care, but you've done nothing to help them by alienating and maligning the very doctors we need to deliver the services they need. Thousands of patients across my riding will be orphaned because you are driving doctors out of Ontario and out of the profession.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question?

Ms Scott: Minister, I don't want to hear your platitudes. I don't want to hear your reannouncements of any of your programs. What I do want to hear is, what are you going to do to fix the doctor problem in Haliburton-Victoria-Brock?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Apparently, based on the limitations of your question, you don't want to hear any reality either, like looking around you to the cruel reality that for eight years your party had the honour and privilege of being the government of Ontario and waited for so many of those years to enhance the capacity to produce doctors.

What have we done? When we arrived here, just as one example, Ontario had the capacity to provide residency spots on an annual basis for 65 of our international medical graduates, those foreign-trained professionals we hear about so much. Barely one year in office, there are 165 foreign-trained doctors in residency positions in Ontario today. Next year, that number will be 200.

Further, we're moving forward on an initiative to build 150 family health teams. Despite the pessimism of the honourable member, what I know for sure is that many of the communities in her very riding are lined up and have expressed interest already in one of our

government's family health teams. I can only assume, as we announce them—

The Speaker: The member from Kitchener-Waterloo, supplementary.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Once again, all we get is rhetoric. This minister once again fails to answer the question, just as the "pay more, get less" health care plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker: It must be time for Christmas with all this chatting going on. For the last time, remember, it's question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary, member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

1500

Mrs Witmer: As I said, once again this minister has failed to answer the question, just as your "pay more, get less" health plan has failed patients in Ontario.

Ontario's doctor shortage needs a minister who can work with, as opposed to alienating, doctors to address the issue. It has been 23 days since doctors overwhelmingly rejected your health plan. It has been 21 days since we asked you in this House what you were going to do about it. Today the public still doesn't know what your plan is to address the issue. One day you tell us you won't negotiate, then you flip-flop and say you will. Then the Premier, on Saturday in the Star, says you won't negotiate.

Minister, will you now admit you bungled the deal with the doctors and made a mistake in trying to impose an agreement on the 24,000 doctors? When are you going to officially resume negotiations, and when do you intend to have a deal in place so we can address the doctor shortage?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member, herself the Minister of Health in this province for three years, can't stand up and ask a supplementary; she has to read it. The idea that we've got 100 more international medical graduates today being given residency spots, which is one small step away from being in service to Ontarians—she calls that rhetoric; I call that progress for Ontarians.

On the matter of our work with the Ontario Medical Association, I'm very pleased to confirm for the honourable member that as of Saturday morning, we've been involved in very fruitful conversations.

SECOND-STAGE HOUSING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): A question to the minister responsible for women's issues: Coroner's inquest reports and women's advocates all agree that without more shelters, second-stage housing and affordable housing, women are being forced not to leave or to return to abusive situations. Despite that women's shelters did not receive the sustained, adequate stable funding they need. Those funds are needed so shelters are not forced to turn women away, like the

Three Oaks shelter that had to turn away 268 women and children last year. Instead, shelters are told today that they will have to deal with the crisis on their own through fundraising. Well, Minister, shelters have been fundraising since the previous government's cuts in 1995. The well is dry. Will you revisit your domestic violence strategy to include sustained, ongoing funding to women's shelters?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the opportunity to lay out a landmark plan that is actually so all-encompassing that it deals with four significant areas that have never been addressed historically by governments, and they all must be. It is a plan about community supports, about training, about public education and prevention, and about justice.

To the point that the member raises, I don't know what she heard today, but let me tell her and the sector what we are offering to strengthen the sector of community supports to deal with women who have found abuse and have finally fled. We are offering more transitional support funding for shelters and second-stage housing. We are also offering a refurbishment fund for second-stage housing and shelters. I hope to get through the rest of our lengthy list on the next question.

Ms Churley: That's nice, Minister, but that's not the question I asked. I'm talking about shelters. The reason shelters are in crisis is because of the shortage of second-stage housing and affordable housing. In the GTA alone, women in shelters now face a wait of up to seven months for housing; it used to be weeks. Your government seemed to understand that in opposition and on several occasions promised to reinstate funding for second-stage housing. But after the election, you broke your promise and instead the money went to 70 agencies for a brand new program. On top of that, you have not matched the federal funds of \$300 million for affordable housing in real time now.

The risk of being murdered is greatest in the year after women leave the abuser. Unless these vital services are in place, more women will die. That is the crux of this issue. You got it wrong today when it comes to shelters. I ask you again, will you commit to follow through on your campaign promises to restore core funding?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I think what's really important to note—and I think it was evidenced by the number of ministers who attended as well, as part of our ministerial task force: 50 different stakeholders who are all participating in our plan in some way. We said very clearly that community supports have to be addressed, because even the NDP government cut shelters by 5%. That was unacceptable. What we said to shelters is that they cannot be subject to the whim of the government of the day for whether or not they will be stable. We are coming forward with funding for shelters and second-stage housing, a new transitional support plan. It's not new. We are enhancing that fund, which is over \$10 million today. We have a new fund for refurbishment funding as well for second-stage and shelters.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): My question today is directed to Minister Pupatello concerning the domestic violence action plan announcement. I am very pleased that our government is moving forward with its promise to make a stronger effort to protect women and children from domestic violence. It is very forward-thinking to address such abhorrent societal issues in a proactive manner. I am both impressed and proud that the announcement you made today demonstrates that leadership.

While our plan is to focus on preventative measures such as changing societal attitudes and providing community support for both women and children in need, it seems to me that it is vitally important to address the practical issue of funding for second-stage housing at this point in time. Women and children will still need shelter. What are the plans for supporting second-stage housing in our communities?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I applaud this member from Hamilton, who has a genuine interest in the support providers of her community. Let me say very clearly, in particular, that where we have agencies that have really struggled over the last decade—in fact, since 1993 these agencies were either cut by the NDP or their funding was entirely eliminated by the Conservatives. What we are saying to this sector is, we need you to be strong. In our plan, we have said very clearly that we have funding available for them to do the transitional support work that they must do, and that is for shelters and second-stage housing.

As well, we've said that we need to refurbish this sector. We are putting together a \$2-million fund for second-stage housing and for shelter. In addition to that, I am tired of seeing these agencies drained and doing all of their work for women, in addition to fundraising. We are finally offering funding to assist them to make their sector stronger.

Ms Marsales: I am, of course, reassured by your message to the second-stage housing providers, who are currently operating on very slim budgets, especially in the Hamilton area, such as Phoenix Place and Second Stage Services. However, I am sure that second-stage housing providers would also be interested—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The members for Hamilton East and Nickel Belt, could you give the member a chance to ask her question without—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Hamilton West, will you complete your question.

Ms Marsales: I am sure the second-stage housing providers would also be interested in knowing the specific funds they will receive and when this will occur, as well as the long-term funding plans for their facilities. Would you please provide us with that information?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I am very pleased to tell people across the province that we have some 30 second-stage housing providers and, for the first time, this past

November we've reached out to the sector to actually engage and have a relationship with them so we can get back involved in funding them. The reality is that for the last decade they had absolutely no funding relationship with any ministry in the Ontario government. So the reality is, we are now working with every single one of these second-stage housing providers so that they will be viable. With the announcement today, they won't just be viable; they will thrive.

1510

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Agriculture: Minister, it has become clear that Dalton McGuinty perceives rural Ontario only as the flyover counties beneath his jet as he flies from Ottawa to Toronto, or to Windsor. As you know, greenbelt farmers are about to see their lifestyles permanently and dramatically changed by your greenbelt legislation. You promised action, but an entire year has passed. Your accomplishments to date: a meeting, a lukewarmly received report and another meeting. And if you get up the nerve—you're feisty enough—maybe you'll ask Jim Warren's permission to do another press release about a meeting.

Sir, farmers have run out of patience. They want to see action; they want to see more than dust gathering on a report. I can say with full confidence that Minister Ernie Hardeman would have solved this problem a long, long time ago.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Minister?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Well, talk about commitment to agriculture. This is coming from a member whose government went through four agriculture ministers in five years. What kind of commitment is that to agriculture? That's quite a slap in the face to the farmers of this province.

As I've said before in this House, and this government has made very clear, we want to create a legacy for the citizens of this province. We want to ensure that farmers have land to farm on in this province. We want farmers farming land; we don't want farmers out there plowing or trying to plow asphalt. We're making sure that as we move forward with the agricultural advisory team initiatives in conjunction with other ministries, we're going to ensure that we have viability in the agricultural sector. Certainly we've demonstrated very clearly—we've come to the table with an additional \$10 million in support for plum pox eradication. We've moved forward with \$173 million in wedge funding for such areas as tender fruit.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Minister, page 8 of your election platform called Growing Strong Rural Communities states that your government would "guarantee a strong Ministry of Agriculture and Food." It goes on to say, "We believe"—

Applause.

Mr Hardeman: It goes on to say, Minister, "We believe that the role of the Minister of Agriculture and Food is one of the most important in cabinet."

Applause.

Mr Hardeman: Can't speak when they're making a noise, Minister.

Applause.

The Speaker: The member from Oxford.

Mr Hardeman: And it says, "We will make OMAF a lead ministry in a Liberal government."

Applause.

The Speaker: If we're not allowing the member to ask the question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Any more of these outbursts and we'll have to take a recess until you all cool off a bit. Could you all allow the member to ask his question now, without any of this applause?

Mr Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Up until then, I agree with those comments. I think that's very important. But how does this government show your ministry is important? It cuts the budget by 20%; it excludes the minister from the important cabinet committees. To me, this is one of the most blatant broken promises your government has made. I guess some people will say anything to get elected.

Minister, will you admit that your government has broken its promise to Ontario's farmers by putting the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food on the shelf? Or will you step down, and let someone who can be a strong minister in the cabinet fulfill this promise? Maybe it's time—

The Speaker: Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Steve Peters: I can't believe the nutrients coming from that member's mouth right now.

Mike Harris said, "No cuts to agriculture," and in the first three months on the job they cut \$40 million out of the budget. As agriculture minister, I'm watching what's going on at Agricorp and not letting staff at Agricorp day trade under my watch.

We've moved forward very quickly: the Premier's agri-food summit, bringing all leaders of the ag industry and the food industry together; \$7 million for increased slaughter capacity; \$20 million for nutrient management; we've fixed the maple syrup assessment operations; we've exempted family-to-family land sales of farms. We're moving forward on many fronts. This is a government that's committed to agriculture. This is the second-largest industry in this province.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today you announced what I would call an inaction plan that contains absolutely no action on the crucial problem of sexual assault. I can't believe you're actually turning your back on women and children who have been

sexually assaulted by refusing to fund the very centres that help them. You just haven't made this a priority enough, even though you know—and I'm sure you do—that one in four women are sexually assaulted, and abused children, as we all know, wear those scars for life.

In your announcement today, not one word about sexual abuse, not one thin dime of funding from your government. Sexual assault centres like Hamilton's saw their funding cut. Before the election, you said you'd restore those cuts. Minister, why haven't you done that? Some 38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their husbands, common-law partners or boyfriends. Domestic violence includes sexual assault. Where is the sexual assault in your action plan, Minister?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): We appreciate the question, because this member opposite probably missed the announcement last fall when the Attorney General announced \$1.4 million specifically targeted to this issue. I appreciate that we have to have a discussion much more fulsome than that on a very important matter around sexual assault. We also understand that public education and prevention are absolutely key.

Individuals who are experts in this area have applauded our plan, which has addressed \$5 million in the largest public education campaign this province has ever undertaken. If we don't get to the root causes of this inequality among the genders, we will never move forward on this important issue.

I appreciate this member's concern, and I will tell you that we expect to see fruits from this plan—something your government failed to do.

Ms Horwath: It's cold comfort to women and families who are currently dealing with sexual abuse to know that you have failed to act on their behalf.

The Hamilton sexual assault centre serves a growing number of clients, and it's stretched to the limit because you're not in the game with funding. In fact, sexual assault isn't even a listing in your government's directory of services.

Your Premier signed a commitment four years ago promising to reinstate the 5% that was cut from sexual abuse centres across Ontario. When are you going to live up to your Premier's promise and bring funding and services for victims of sexual assault up to where they need to be? Or is this just, as we all suspect, another McGuinty Liberal broken promise?

Hon Ms Pupatello: I know that the people who work in this very important area, who deal with individuals who have been sexually assaulted, would look at our plan today and say it deals with four significant areas, unlike any previous government's plan. What's so important is that it is a balanced plan. That balanced plan includes community supports, training, public education, prevention and justice. We have made announcements—last fall, and last April as well—dealing with those issues.

We will continue to move forward. I respect that we have a party in opposition that wants to stay in the 1970s.

We, on the other hand, are prepared to move forward and look at where we will be. It has as much to do with public opinion and public attitudes, that we are prepared to actually put funding on the table so that we can see significant shifts in attitudes in Ontario.

1520

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Today I was in the region of York representing you. I was pleased that with me were the members for Oak Ridges and York North. Both of them spoke very positively about your announcement. Of course, people are very excited about what we had to say. Minister, will you please explain to the House and to the people of Thornhill how the new children's treatment centre for families in Simcoe-York will work?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First, I would like to congratulate all the people in Simcoe-York region who worked so hard to make this treatment centre a reality: the members of the steering committee, the members of Simcoe York District Health Council, my colleagues in the Legislature who have reminded me constantly of just how important and urgent the need is and, most importantly, the parents of the region, who have been tireless advocates for their children.

Today we announced the approval of a children's treatment centre across York region and Simcoe county to support children with special needs and their families closer to home. This was the only region in the province without a CTC. Many of these families travelled to Toronto or even Hamilton for treatment. That changed today. We're making it easier for York-Simcoe families to get the services and support they need. A new children's treatment centre for York-Simcoe means those services will now be available throughout the region. The new centre—

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): She's reading.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Yes, Elizabeth, I'm reading; I'm tired.

The new centre will be a network of centres. Ten local teams in communities across the region will provide physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, as well as many other supports. We accepted their proposal because we know the people of the community know what's best for their children.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary, the member from Markham.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): Minister, you are also aware that York-Simcoe is one of the fastest-growing regions in the province. How many children do you think you can serve, and when will the new network be fully operational?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: The province will invest \$3 million next year to begin providing clinical services, and by 2006-07 it will be fully operational, with an annual budget of up to \$10.5 million, which will service more than 3,800 children in this very fast-growing region.

We recognize that Simcoe-York is one of the fastest-growing regions in the province; therefore, the formula we used to determine operating funds acknowledges the population growth in these communities. It's great news for these families. They were very excited to be there. They worked hard to make this happen. I thank all the members of the Legislature for informing me of the need. It was a very good day for the families of Simcoe-York.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. In January, the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force issued a report which you respectfully endorsed wholeheartedly. On page 60 of that report, it says the phasing out of coal "would mean a price that is both higher and more volatile...." In fact, your friend John Manley has said that unless you make every effort to meet supply needs, Ontario could face an electricity shortage by 2007.

The problem is, you've been going around being King Coal, saying, "No more coal." Now you're saying, "We will need coal, just in case." Minister, you're doing the classic Liberal flip-flop. Will you stand in your place today and admit the election pledge to shut down coal plants by 2007 is now going up in smoke? Will you stand in your place today and say that, Minister?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I again want to congratulate the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force on their recommendations. In fact, we did act on a number of them; they were part of Bill 100. I remind the member that he voted against their recommendations. You voted against them. You spoke against them. You travelled the province and spoke against them.

Our government remains committed to replacing coal-fired generation, and we will identify the cleanest, most affordable potential power sources in Ontario as replacements for coal. We believe it's important to clean up this province's air quality. We're concerned about the CO₂ emissions from coal. We're concerned about mercury and particulates. We're concerned about the levels of childhood asthma we've seen in this province. We're concerned that we have had smog days in Algonquin Park and Sault Ste Marie.

We remain committed to replacing the coal-fired generation and, as I say and re-emphasize, we will identify the cleanest, most affordable potential power sources in Ontario as a replacement for coal.

Mr O'Toole: It's a somewhat disappointing response. Minister, I would not be surprised if you got a lump of coal in your stocking this Christmas. He knows he's going to need coal-powered or reliable sources of power

for homes and businesses that keep this economy and our standard of living going. The elimination of coal, everyone would admit, was an irresponsible election promise. It's clear the minister simply doesn't get it.

Generation isn't the same as flipping a light switch. You can't just turn power generation off and on. Minister, will you give the people of Ontario a straight answer for once? Which is it going to be: no coal and keep your promise, or there will be coal and another broken promise? Minister, which is it, or is this just going up in smoke in your face?

Hon Mr Duncan: I'll accept a lump of coal for Christmas, as long as we get coal out of people's lungs in this province in the time frame that we've suggested we'd do it.

Let me set the record straight, first of all, because the member didn't, about what the conservation task force said. They said they should maintain existing generation until new supplies and demand reduction measures are in place. That party, which did 14 megawatts of renewable generation, compared to our 395, doesn't get it.

You don't get the fact that the OMA has accounted for 1,800 premature deaths due to coal. There is a cost associated with that, both to our health care system and to our society. The member opposite just doesn't get the fact that we should not have smog days in Algonquin Park.

We remain committed to achieving our goal in the time frame outlined. We believe in better quality air, unlike the member opposite. Quit defending the polluters.

ASSISTANCE TO THE DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Mr Minister, after all these many months, your ministry is still sending out letters to people who have applied for the retail sales tax rebate for vehicles purchased to transport persons with permanent physical disabilities. They're still being told, although the law is being changed, that their applications are being held in abeyance, pending passage of your laws.

Mr Minister, my question is very simple: How can you expect people to understand the gobbledygook you're sending out to them, and will you honour, as the Minister of Community and Social Services had, the program and pay these people who are in the waiting line, who have had the rug pulled out from under them?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I just want to advise my friend from Beaches-East York that when the bill is passed, we will have a much better system of providing financial supports for those with disabilities, because we move away from just financing the purchase of vehicles by way of a sales tax exemption to financial supports that assist people with disabilities—and I think this is the point that the people of Ontario want to know—in home renovations that will allow them to live lives that are much more convenient than were they not to have those economic supports.

I want to tell my friend that we are very clear on our Web site about the pending passage of this legislation.

and the improvements in supports that will result when we pass this bill.

Mr Prue: Mr Minister, the Minister of Community and Social Services stood in her place on November 17 and told the Chenier family that she would look into the matter. On that same day, she phoned them and told them that they were going to get the money from this very program, the program you are now denying to other Ontarians.

We want to know, if it's good enough for the Chenier family, and if that family is going to get their money, why are the dozens of other families that have applied under the same scheme and in the same time frame being told no? Clearly, the Chenier family are not the only ones who have been duped. There are many others. We are asking you, quite frankly, will you assure this House that you will keep your promises to all Ontarians? Will you shelve the plan to eliminate the rebate? Last but not least, will your government honour the same commitment to everyone that you have made to the Chenier family?

1530

Hon Mr Sorbara: The first thing I'll do is implore my friend from Beaches-East York to show some respect for a family that is suffering certain difficulties, and their request not to be made the subject of repeated question periods. I'm just advising my friend of that.

I also want to tell him that the passage of the Accessibility for Ontarians With Disabilities Act will be one of the significant achievements of this Legislature this sitting. Moving from a single retail sales tax rebate on a vehicle to comprehensive assistance for families who need to make housing modifications is a magnificent improvement, consistent with the measures that my friend the minister brought with the bill for Ontarians with disabilities. I commend them to my friend so that we'll pass that legislation and put those improvements in place by the time we rise on Thursday.

PETITIONS

CORMORANTS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas cormorant populations in the Great Lakes basin have increased to over 450,000 birds over the past several years, are continuing to grow, and are significantly depleting fish populations; and

"Whereas numerous scientific studies have clearly shown the serious negative impact on fish stocks and freshwater habitats; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources continues to study the impact of cormorants and possible management strategies; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has committed to experimental control of cormorants at specific sites;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources to immediately begin to significantly reduce cormorant populations in areas where they are having a demonstrably negative impact on local fisheries through managed culls."

NORTH OF SUPERIOR PROGRAMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition.

"Whereas northwestern Ontario communities have been without essential mental health, addiction and child services since June 26, 2004, because of a strike at North of Superior Programs; and

"Whereas the North of Superior Programs' board of directors has failed to offer solutions to end the strike and has failed to achieve a quorum at important board meetings; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has recently dissolved ineffective volunteer boards in Parry Sound, Muskoka and Ottawa;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to take over North of Superior Programs. Our communities need to be represented."

This is signed by thousands of residents in the communities of Marathon, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Manitouwadge, Nipigon, Red Rock, Geraldton, Longlac and Beardmore, and I have affixed my signature to it as well.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition that's written to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life or death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I put my name on this petition with full support and hand it over to Lee, who is from my riding of Brant.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION RESTRUCTURING

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have here some 5,051 signatures sent to me by Mary Easter, who is with

a group called Parents for Quality Education in the Chatham-Kent area. I read the petition to the Legislature.

"Whereas the administration of both school boards proposed multi-tier busing in the community of Chatham-Kent;

"Whereas the Lambton Kent District School Board defeated the proposal April 27, 2004;

"Whereas the St Clair Catholic District School Board passed the proposal April 27, 2004;

"Whereas the requirement was that both boards pass the motion in order for the restructuring to move to the implementation phase;

"Whereas the administration of the St Clair Catholic District School Board determined to implement the restructuring without the Lambton Kent District School Board;

"Whereas the Lambton Kent District School Board reconsidered the April 27, 2004, motion on June 8, and voted to implement multi-tier;

"Whereas the public of Chatham-Kent has clearly indicated its opposition to transportation restructuring;

"Whereas the multi-tiered proposal was implemented on September 7, 2004;

"Whereas there have been innumerable problems associated with implementation involving the safety and efficiency of the multi-tiered transportation proposal;

"Whereas the implementation problems have resulted in serious educational concerns;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislature of Ontario to request the Ministry of Education to appeal to the Lambton Kent District School Board and the St Clair Catholic District School Board to revert from the new school bus transportation and start-time model back to the previous model used by the respective Chatham-Kent district school boards during the 2003-04 school year."

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more" when the government puts in this "new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario"—that's us—"as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding

for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

It's signed by a number of people from my riding and Sudbury.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

I'll give this to our page.

YORK CENTRAL HOSPITAL

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's concerning the support for the York Central Hospital and reads as follows:

"Whereas there is an urgent need to update and expand the health care facilities at York Central Hospital; and

"Whereas the emergency department at York Central Hospital that was originally built for 25,000 visits now sees over 63,000 visits; and

"Whereas the population of York region has multiplied more than seven times since York Central Hospital was built, with no change to the hospital acute care infrastructure; and

"Whereas York Central Hospital has met 100% of the Ministry of Health's internal planning requirements and is ready immediately to go to tender; and

"Whereas it is unconscionable to ask patients in York region to start from the beginning, with a new government process;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, demonstrate its support of quality health care in York region by immediately announcing the approval of all phases of the major expansion and renovation of York Central Hospital."

I'm pleased to affix my personal signature to this petition.

PIT BULLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that was contributed to me at a reception at the home of Taposhi and Upendra Pai. It reads as follows:

"Whereas pit bulls are dangerous dogs, showing as a breed a tendency for vicious attacks on adults, children and other animals out of all proportion to their numbers; and

"Whereas jurisdictions where bans on pit bulls have been introduced have seen dramatic reductions in pit bull attacks on people and other animals; and

"Whereas residents of Mississauga and community leaders and law enforcement officials all across Ontario have supported a ban on pit bull ownership;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario enact legislation banning ownership of pit bulls in the province of Ontario, enact specific measures to require existing pit bulls to be muzzled while in public, and require existing pit bulls to be spayed or neutered."

I support this petition, and I'll ask Adam to carry it for me.

1540

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a bundle of petitions here from Dr Johannes Baarbe, who's a chiropractor in Bowmanville, and his patients.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse this" hasty "decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services," optometry and physiotherapy, "in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this petition on behalf of many patients of chiropractic in the province of Ontario.

GREAT LAKES POWER

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition signed by over 500 people in the St Joseph Island area. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, hereby give notice of our objection to the planned outages by Great Lakes Power on St Joseph Island, scheduled for the month of December. We fully support the concerns of island residents and believe they have a right to comfort and safety of their homes during the winter and particularly in the Christmas season."

I agree with this petition and will be signing it and giving it to our page from Sucker Creek on Manitoulin Island, Savannah.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometrist services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I support this petition.

YORK CENTRAL HOSPITAL

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I have a petition with regard to York Central Hospital via 1,161 letters and postcards. The petition says:

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Whereas

"(1) Each year thousands of York region residents rely on receiving timely access to high-quality health at York Central Hospital;

"(2) The capacity of our hospital to meet the health care needs of local residents is falling behind;

"(3) York Central Hospital has a plan. A plan that is supported by the local community and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"(4) The community has already donated \$30 million to making the expansion a reality;

"We, the undersigned, submit 1,161 letters and postcards to this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve this year the funding for the major expansion and renovation at York Central Hospital."

I have signed this in support.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have petitions to reopen the Leslie M. Frost Centre and they read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre has been Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on ecosystems and their sustainability for future generations; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government refused to consult with municipalities and other user groups before taking this drastic action and continues to operate in a clandestine manner; and

"Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary and post-secondary institutions, as well as a variety of other groups;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre, allowing valuable summer programs to continue while a long-term solution is developed."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks and children's playgrounds;

"Whereas it is, therefore, unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

"Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

"Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminum cans worth \$27 million into landfill every year instead of recycling them;

"Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

"Whereas the province of Quebec already has legislation obligating the vendors to accept the refund on all pop drinks, whether bottles or cans;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, bottles of beer, wine, Tetra Pak juice and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment."

I agree with this, and I sign this with a great deal of pride.

TUITION

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from Local 24 Ryerson Students' Administrative Council, Local 92 Student Association of George Brown College and Local 93 Glendon College Students' Union of York University.

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition fee freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (a) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (b) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (c) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

ROYAL ASSENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 25, An Act respecting government advertising / Projet de loi 25, Loi concernant la publicité gouvernementale.

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

Bill 73, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads / Projet de loi 73, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des enfants et des jeunes sur les routes de l'Ontario.

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004 / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la protection de la ceinture de verdure.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent for the House to sit beyond 6 pm today for the purpose of considering concurrence in supply and the Supply Act, following which the House will stand adjourned until 1:30 pm tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is there consent? Agreed.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program, the order for committee of the whole House be discharged and the bill be ordered for third reading; and

That one hour, split equally between the recognized parties, be allocated to third reading debate on Bill 82 and at the end of that time, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage without further debate or amendment; and

That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion 294.

Hon Mr Duncan: I'm pleased to rise to speak on this motion this afternoon. What the government is attempting to do on the whole education file is, in my view, the right direction. By dealing with Bill 82 tonight, we will remove what we think has been an unfair and unjust piece of work done by the previous government that has affected our educators in what I would call a very, very negative way.

On behalf of our party—and other members will be speaking at greater length to this momentarily—I want to stress that we recognize and appreciate the role of our teachers, elementary and secondary, right across the province.

I heard a very interesting radio advertisement not long ago, where the announcer asked you to name very quickly Hollywood stars and professional sports athletes, but then asked you to name a teacher who taught you or your children.

I'm pleased to begin this debate so we can end what the Tories did to the teaching profession in this province—end it today, once and for all. I'm proud of this government's record of achievement in education, hiring 1,100 new teachers. We're moving the province's education system back on to the right track.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm not pleased to be standing to debate this bill at all, because it shouldn't even be before the House. This is a bill that I believe is going to do significant harm to the education system in our province. I also believe, quite frankly, that it simply represents a payoff, a payback to the teachers' unions in this province.

I read to you from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario publication, called Voice. This is in their fall edition, the most recent, and I read a quote from the general secretary: "At this year's annual meeting Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education, confirmed his commitment to dealing with two issues that ETFO"—Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario—"members have been campaigning on for several years: the repeal of the professional learning program ... and reform of the Ontario College of Teachers."

It's no secret that the teachers' unions have been lobbying for a number of years now, since our government, the past government, implemented the professional learning program for teachers. I might also say very clearly that it is a small minority of teachers who have been lobbying for the removal of the professional learning program. The vast majority of teachers fully support the professional learning program.

I want to read into the record some quotes. First of all, "Teacher testing and the professional learning program should not be regarded as something to fear in this profession. Those with confidence and ability will use it to further demonstrate their competence. This is long overdue." This was by Cathy Cove from Parent Network when Bill 74, the education accountability act, was introduced.

Another quote is from Terry Ross, who was a special-education teacher at the time at the Halton District School Board. It reads as follows: "While few of us like to be tested, we all know that a demonstration of competence is also a demonstration of professionalism. It is vitally important to ensure teachers entering the profession are fully prepared to respond to the demands of a teaching career. New teachers need to receive the support and be able to learn from the expertise of successful colleagues."

I go on to quote from Donna Luchko, a parent who sat on the school council of the Peel District School Board at the time: "The requirement of recertification every five years will help by ensuring that all teachers take some form of professional development."

I quote Marty Cugelman, retired teacher, Toronto District School Board: "The teachers will be helped by being allowed to select courses appropriate to their needs. Confidence in the school system will be improved when

the public sees teachers making an effort to keep up with new developments in their subject areas.”

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): They always have.

Mr Klees: I hear a member of the Liberal caucus carping over there—they always have, and they do it anyway.

I'd like to read into the record this quote from Solette Gelberg, and instead of carping, I'd like the member to just listen: “Having been appointed by all three political parties in Ontario, at various times, to serve as a public member of a regulatory body, I was a public member of the Ontario College of Teachers council from its inception in 1997 until 2002.”

I go on, and this is what the member should be listening to now:

“The first council was told that between 25% and 33% of Ontario teachers had never participated in any voluntary professional development. Nevertheless, in the late 1990s, the” Ontario College of Teachers “council defeated the motion to institute mandatory professional learning and left it to the government to do so. Despite what the teacher federations say, most of the teachers with whom I have spoken support the college’s professional learning program. Changes could be made to the current program that would address some teachers’ concerns without dismantling a well-designed program. The mandatory assessment component could be removed.”

I want to make it very clear that I will be voting against this legislation, and so will, I trust and believe fully, all members of our caucus. The reasons are very clear. I’ve just read into the record the fact that it is not at all the majority of teachers who object to this. It is also not true that the vast majority of teachers voluntarily take training. As we have heard and as the record shows, there are some 30%, 33%, 35% of teachers who never take training. As with any regulation, as with any requirement, it is to ensure that there is compliance by the majority. In this case, it’s teachers who teach our children.

Members of the government, I say to you, wake up. This is not the place to compromise. This isn’t the place to be led by the teachers’ unions, to bring you as a government into compliance with their wishes; this is where leadership on the part of government should be demonstrated.

Yesterday, at a reception in my riding of Oak Ridges, I had a constituent come to me and say, “Look, I understand that the government is now going to be passing this legislation that will eliminate the professional learning program for teachers. How can you do that?” I took some time, as I want to make very clear today, that this is not the will of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. It is not the will of our caucus. It is not something we would have done. And we did everything we possibly could do to ensure that the government had more time to consider their actions. What it has taken is a move on the part of this government to shut down debate. They have used their majority authority in this House to bring this

bill forward, and they are now time-allocating this bill, through the motion that we’re debating today, which means that we’re powerless. We have absolutely no power to avoid what I consider to be a major mistake on the part of this government.

1600

So this government is intent on rushing this bill through before Christmas, again, I say to you, without doubt as a payback for promises that they made to the teachers’ unions while on the campaign trail. While this government may well be able to deliver on this, there is a day of reckoning coming for this government with the teachers’ unions.

Laughter.

Mr Klees: Members in the backbench of the Liberal Party laugh today. They will not be laughing when the teachers are on strike because they haven’t been able to comply with another promise they made, and that is to load up when it come to teachers’ contracts.

Mark my words, chief whip, who laughs: I tell you that today you are facing a challenge.

The Minister of Education, in a four-page letter to school boards across the province, has now set the stage for what I believe will be a showdown the likes of which this province has never seen. The Minister of Education—the same minister—and the Premier, who have made a commitment to the teachers’ unions of this province on a number of fronts, have already taken the first step to interfere with the collective bargaining process that teachers have enjoyed over the years in this province. Effectively, this Minister of Education has initiated province-wide bargaining and wage controls for teachers in this province. Mark my words, teachers: This Minister of Education has made it very clear that there will only be money there for a 2%, 2.5%, 3% and 3.5% wage settlement agreement over the next four years.

First of all, I do not believe that it’s appropriate for that Minister of Education to have interfered in that bargaining process. I am going to ask the chief whip who I don’t think still fully understands the reach of that Minister of Education’s letter, to brace himself for the day when the teachers’ unions awaken to the fact that this Minister of Education has now single-handedly changed how they negotiate contracts in this province from local board negotiations to central, province-wide bargaining. That, effectively, is the result.

Back to this legislation. The Ottawa Citizen, on May 17—and I want to read this into the record: “Education Minister Gerard Kennedy has cancelled the hated Tories ‘teacher testing’ program, in the name of labour peace. But what’s he going to replace it with?”

“Apart from journalists and teachers, there aren’t many professional groups left in Ontario where there isn’t some mandatory ongoing professional development. Accountants, police officers, firefighters and doctors are just some of the professionals who make additional learning a big part of their professional lives.”

I’m going to close my remarks because I want to leave some opportunity for my colleagues to speak to this.

want to close with this: Not only is this legislation going to do harm to the education system in our province, but it also underscores one more time the fact that the Premier of this province shows little concern over breaking his promises once again; at saying one thing when he's seeking office while he's in opposition and doing something totally different and contrary when he is the Premier. On October 3, 2001, Dalton McGuinty said on Focus Ontario, "We will insist that all teachers continue to improve their teaching skill, as distinct from acquiring academic certification, which may or may not relate to how well they perform inside the classroom."

On May 22, 1999, the same Dalton McGuinty said, "I agree that teachers should be tested. New teachers should be tested. I think that teachers should be tested as nothing more and nothing less than professionals. So I think they should have the same responsibilities when it comes to testing as lawyers and doctors and accountants and architects and so on. They're all tested at the beginning of their professional careers in order to be admitted to the profession." That was then; this is now.

I read to you a quote from the Toronto Star, December 11, 2004, just a couple of days ago. The headline is "Ontario to Scrap Test for New Teachers." I quote Theresa Boyle:

"The province is scrapping a controversial qualifying test for new teachers, two years after it was introduced by the former Tory government.

"It was not much of a quality check," Education Minister Gerard Kennedy said yesterday, noting that 99% of those who took it passed it." Well, what was he expecting? That 99% fail? What is he going to expect? That 50% of teachers fail? Rather than celebrating the fact that 99% of the teachers were passing that qualifying test, rather than reaffirming the qualifying test, he said, "We'll scrap it because 99% pass it anyway," and now there's not going to be one.

It goes on to say, "The Liberal government plans to replace the test by next September with an 'induction year.'" Well, isn't that nice. He's scrapping a test. He doesn't have one in place to replace it, so we're going through an induction year. And through this period of time there's no need for the kind of testing that the Premier, in the past, had said is so important. It speaks to the inability of this government to manage, it speaks to the incompetency of this government and it speaks to the fact that they are only too equipped and too ready to simply do what those who got them elected demand that they do, whether it benefits the students of this province or not, whether or not it's consistent with the wishes of the parents in this province, who surely should have a say in the education system and who, I might say, overwhelmingly support the concept of teacher testing and certainly entrance exams to the teaching profession.

Speaker, I rest my case. I will be voting against this legislation. I say to you that it is not a good day for education in Ontario. This will be remembered. It is certainly not a proud day for the Minister of Education of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to rise from my seat this afternoon to talk about Bill 82, teacher testing. The teacher testing regime was one that people will recall was a big part of the former Conservative government's teacher-bashing tactics that they decided they were going to undertake early on in their mandate.

From my perspective, teacher-bashing should never have had an official place of any kind in Ontario politics, but when Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and the Conservatives were in government, they delighted in making teachers their enemy. They passed a number of different laws that attacked teachers. In fact, they made teacher-bashing a bit of a team sport when they were in government, where they ganged up on teachers every chance they could get. The program they had, of course, people will recall, was denounced by teachers for many, many reasons, so it's certainly a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this bill that purports to get rid of teacher testing.

1610

The reason why the teachers denounced so vocally and so vehemently the Tory Conservative initiatives around teachers was particularly and primarily because it was an unnecessary move, particularly the issue around teacher testing. It was unnecessary by all accounts from the teachers' perspective, and in fact the Canadian Teachers' Federation indicates that more than 90% of teachers in Canada already participate in ongoing professional development with both informal and formal opportunities.

Why else was it inappropriate? It was an expensive program. The College of Teachers' 2002 business plan estimated the annual cost of running the PLP at over \$10 million. A \$35 fee increase was authorized by the college to cover its PLP-related costs.

Thirdly, it was a politically driven move, and I think most people in Ontario recognize that. Teachers certainly know that the best professional development is voluntary and self-directed professional development based on professional development goals that are derived from their own professional needs and their own priorities as teachers. It is not a replacement for lost professional development days.

People of Ontario, and teachers in particular, will know that New Democrats have always said that teacher testing was a boondoggle, that it accomplished nothing and disrupted everything when it was brought in by the former government. It was a typical *modus operandi* by the previous government. Conservatives really tended to make a mess of things, and teacher testing was certainly no exception to that rule.

Now it's the Liberals' turn, and what we need to see is whether they're going to make any less of a mess when it comes to this issue and others. We know they haven't invested at this point in time in implementing the Rozanski report like they had promised to do. They promised to shore up their investments in education, and they have fallen very short of that promise.

I think the public has come to the conclusion that, in a kind of open and shut manner, the Liberal McGuinty

government is a promise-breaking government. I think the people of Ontario, including teachers, recognize very clearly that the McGuinty Liberals can't be trusted to keep any of their promises. There was a time when Liberals said that they would never force a bill through using a method that we call here time allocation, but guess what? This bill has been time-allocated. This very discussion that we're having today is a time-allocated discussion.

I guess it depends on the time of day or the very day—maybe on a Monday, maybe on a Tuesday—as to whether or not what they say can be taken at face value. They said “no time allocation.” They said “openness, transparency, democratic renewal, open debate, accountability.” These are all things that the Liberal government has said time and time again, but every time we turn around, they're going back on their word in one way or another.

So first they said no time allocation, and today they time-allocate this bill. The McGuinty Liberal approach is hardly discernable, quite frankly, from the Conservatives of old when it comes to time allocation. Ironically, back in 1995, McGuinty supported teacher testing. The 1995 Ontario Liberal plan stated, “As part of our plan for reforming elementary, secondary and post-secondary education, we will strengthen teacher education by doubling the length of the preparation program to two years and requiring teachers to upgrade their certification during their careers.”

Under the Liberals, it looks like some teacher testing might be back, but perhaps in an altered form. The Liberals told teachers that the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act of 2004 will be passed by June and that a discussion paper will be launched soon to find an alternative thereafter.

What we see instead is that the Liberal government appears to be dragging its feet on this bill. They're not sure what they want to do next. While we've seen other bills racing through this House, particularly in the last week or so, this bill has been called for only one long, single, solitary day of debate.

This past August, in fact, the Liberals floated their new discussion paper that proposes alternatives to the Conservative teacher testing schemes. Their solution may be Liberal teacher testing schemes. What does that discussion paper look like? Well, clearly, entry tests will be back. On page 16, the Liberals state, “Having an entry test to teaching is consistent with our approach of treating teachers as responsible professionals and is helpful to ensure student familiarity with Ontario curriculum and provincial education objectives.”

While the Liberals reject licensing sanctions, which is more or less when teachers' certificates are pulled for failing to take courses and upgrade their skills, they do note, “Some professional colleges set quality designations that have to be maintained by their members or the extra designations are lost. We look forward to having a revitalized College of Teachers consider this question.”

It's a bit of double-speak, from my perspective, when you talk about rejection of licensing sanctions and then turn around and say, “But really, if we're talking about quality designations that are not kept up with, then those extra designations would be lost.” It seems to me that it's a similar situation as the licensing sanction: If you're not keeping up with your designations, they get pulled—very similar to sanctioning on licences.

Nonetheless, what we really can see, I think, if we look closely is that the Liberals haven't at all lived up to their education promises. I'm going to take you through a couple of other areas, particularly in education, where this becomes very evident.

The Liberals claim that they will replace the Conservative teacher testing with something better. Unfortunately, as we already know, there's a credibility problem here. After promising to end the cutbacks in education, the Liberals have begun phasing in something called the transportation model that will mean cutbacks for over 30 school boards in Ontario. So somehow, a promise to end cutbacks is translated into cutbacks when it comes to transportation. Through the government's new allocation model for student transportation, some boards will see their school bus budgets drop by as much as 63%—a 63% reduction in their school bus budgets. That's a pretty serious cut for any school board to have to deal with. Some boards could benefit, however, from a reallocation of those funds. But more than 30 school boards across the province will see their transportation budgets slashed for the 2005-06 school year.

Having looked at those figures for the community that I represent and done a little bit of my homework, I've discovered that's the case for both the Hamilton district school board and the separate school board in Hamilton, both of which will have their transportation budgets cut in 2005-06. That's just one example in my community.

The member from Durham, who's here today, will know that the board in his area, the Durham District School Board, has already cut services in preparation for the funding loss that it's going to be experiencing when this model is completely rolled out. Almost 1,000 children have already lost their seats on their school buses as a result. These figures and descriptions of what these transportation models mean in terms of dollars is one thing, but what they mean in terms of how they affect children and families is quite another thing. We not only have 1,000 children who have already lost their seats in this particular scenario, but parents also report cases where one of their children rides the school bus and a sister or brother who attends the very same school has to be driven to school because there's no room on the bus. They know the cuts are coming and they can't expand the number of buses servicing the kids.

It's pretty tragic when you think about it. If you're a parent, imagine taking your kids, your son and your daughter, to the school bus. One of them gets on the bus and the other one goes to get on, and you have to hold him or her back by the arm and say, “No, honey. You can't go on the bus with your big sister, “or big brother.

"You're going to have to wait and have mom or dad drive you to the school."

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Kids don't understand that. I don't understand that, so I don't know how children can. It's certainly a cruel way to treat families, particularly as a result of transportation models that take away from some communities and re-allocate so that other communities do well. It's the communities that have the money taken from them that end up in crisis situations, with parents and children who suffer from these cuts in ways that are just unbelievable.

There's also the situation, particularly in rural Ontario, where parents are forced to walk their children to school, as a result of transportation cuts, on rural highways that don't have any sidewalks. Talk about being a government that doesn't have good foresight when it comes to the safety of children. On the one hand you're putting all kinds of new regulations around school bus safety; on the other hand you're making sure a lot of children aren't going to be able to take the school bus, so their families have to walk them to school on roads that are unsafe for pedestrians.

The Minister of Education claims that this model transportation plan is just a draft plan, but what we see from the reaction of some of these boards is that the ministry is in fact currently phasing the program in. I talked a little bit about the effect, in rural communities, of this kind of transportation policy and it's interesting, because in the city that I come from, we have quite a mixed array of areas where we have schools. We do have schools in rural communities and we also have schools in urban communities. What we're going to see in Hamilton are similar situations, where kids have to walk longer distances to school, and particularly in the inner city will be facing serious challenges where we have high-traffic, speedway-type roads, where there's a huge volume of truck and car traffic, particularly during rush hour, when children are trying to get to school safely. It's simply an untenable situation for children to have to walk, with those roads the way they are.

It will also mean that, when kids are walking farther and farther to school, those who have a need, for example, for special education courses are not going to be able to get the transportation they need to get to the particular school that provides the courses. When they have to travel outside of their neighbourhoods, they'll have to rely on some other mode of transportation. What that could possibly mean is that parents will have to choose, in many cases; in the community I come from, there's a high number of low-income families, a high number of families dealing with issues of poverty. Those families are not going to be able to simply put their child in a cab or drive them, because they don't have a car. It means quite a disruption, in regard to the rest of the family, to try get that child to school. I fear, and I certainly hope this isn't the case, that some of those children will be going without the special education they require simply because the government has put together a transportation model that doesn't have the foresight to

recognize the various needs these children should have fulfilled in the education system.

In Niagara, both the public and Catholic boards will experience a combined cut of \$3.8 million if the new model is introduced. Of that, the largest deficit is going to be experienced by the public board, at approximately \$2.9 million.

After promising a moratorium on school closures, the government has also decided to advocate for school closures. On the one hand, no cuts to education; on the other hand, the transportation model immediately indicates great cuts to education. The government talks about reinvesting in education, and yet we see it's not fulfilling the recommendations of the Rozanski report: Promise a moratorium on school closures.

The very community I represent is facing school closures in both boards. The Liberals have started now to advocate for these kinds of closures. In fact, on December 12, one year ago, the minister announced the moratorium on school closures. He also promised that there would be a new funding formula to deliver an added \$177 million for rural schools by March of this year. This is the same minister who praised the Lakehead District School Board in Thunder Bay this year for their plans to close 19 schools, many of them rural. So when you talk about a government that says one thing and does another or that doesn't keep its promises, you can really see quite clearly, particularly in education, that that's the case.

Nonetheless, after promising more special education funding, the Liberals in fact clawed back special-ed funding from a number of different boards. In July, the McGuinty government announced \$100 million in funding for special education students. But shortly afterwards, the irony of it all is that the Liberal government then ordered school boards to hand back an estimated \$102 million that they had banked in special education reserve accounts as of the end of 2003-04. On the one hand they're saying, "We're going to invest in special education. Here's a whole bunch of money—\$100 million," and then on the other hand, they claw back or take away \$102 million. It seems to me that special education funding is at a \$2-million deficit, as opposed to actually an increase, which is what the government promised.

Much of the money has already been spent, however, by these boards on special education during the 2003 and 2004 school years. Most of the rest had already been earmarked, in one way or another, for special education programs during 2004-05. So what that means is that these cuts are going to have a serious impact on the opportunities for school boards to provide special education for children who require it.

The Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Nouvel-Ontario, Sudbury area, spent the \$384,000 that was in their books for August 2003 in the last school year, but the province wants the funds returned, even though they've already spent it. They've already spent the money, but they're being told, "We need the money back." So to make up the difference, that board is going to have to cut staff this year, in 2004, so they can pay the government back over \$384,000.

The Rainbow District School Board—again, in the Sudbury area—will have to give McGuinty \$2.2 million of their special education money. As a result, the board won't be able to hire special education teachers or educational assistants at all this year, as they had been planning. It will also have to cut the hiring of early reading intervention teachers by half.

How is this a new plan for education in Ontario? How is this a positive move forward to bring schools out of the crisis mode that they were in with the former government?

The Waterloo Catholic District School Board will lose \$880,500. The board will not be able to rehire 20 teaching assistants for special needs students who were laid off in the spring.

The examples go on and on: Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.

I already mentioned Durham District School Board in terms of transportation. They also have educational assistants being cut.

The Windsor Catholic School Board: stripped of \$2.2 million earmarked for special education programs and services.

Quite frankly, when the government talks about making positive changes to education, they've missed the mark in so many ways. But as usual, the devil is in the detail. They make all kinds of wonderful, great announcements, and they stick by them until somebody starts going through the announcements with a fine-tooth comb—actually going through the plans with a fine-tooth comb—and then taking a microscope and looking at the difference between the plan and the actual announcement. Time and time again we see that, in fact, what the government plans to do is quite different from what they've announced and told the residents of Ontario they're going to be doing.

When it comes to teacher testing, quite frankly, we in the NDP have no difficulty putting an end to teacher testing. We think it's draconian. We think it was a piece of legislation in a regime that was loathsome, the former Conservative government. We have no problem at all supporting the removal of that odious system from our teachers.

But what you also have to remember is that we're going to continue to remain vigilant, and we're going to maintain our stand of observing, criticizing and uncovering what this government's really doing when they're making all of these pleasant announcements. We want to make sure that when they make these announcements, they mean them. We want to make sure that when they claim they're going to be doing something to make positive change for the people of Ontario, they're actually going to be implementing positive change. We want to make sure that the Liberals keep all of their promises and don't sneak through any of their unwelcome or unwise surprises, many of which we've seen already.

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Ordinary Ontarians are extremely disappointed with all the Liberal letdowns, but they can rely on us, the New

Democrats, to hold Dalton McGuinty's feet to the fire and make sure he keeps his promises, whether it's on teacher testing, whether it's on educational spending, whether it's on the things we were talking about today in question period in terms of programs for women. Any of these initiatives are all nice announcements, but it's up to us, and we continue to be dedicated to ensuring that those announcements aren't just a bunch of fluff but actually get implemented by this government. We'll be there every step of the way, making sure this government is held accountable for the announcements they make, so they actually implement the changes they tell Ontarians they're going to implement.

So the bottom line is: teacher testing, glad to see it go; all the other promises the Liberals have made, would like to see some of them implemented.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm certainly glad to hear from the member for Hamilton East that the NDP will be supporting this bill, because I think it is absolutely consistent with what both they and we have said about the professional learning program that the Tories put in place.

On the process that Bill 82 is taking right now, I just want to make a couple of comments, because there have been some references by both the opposition parties to time allocation. I just want to state for the record that this bill has had 10 hours and 20 minutes of debate so far. Interestingly, the opposition has rung the bell for three hours of that. I think it's interesting that 18 people have had a chance in this House to speak to this bill and a number more have commented on those statements.

The point is that Bill 82 is a key campaign commitment, there have been many hours of debate on it and we're committed to moving it through. As well, there have been explicit statements from the Tories that they would move to delay this bill. We feel it is important that we move this piece of legislation through.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the practical reasons for this legislation. We said that philosophically we were opposed to the way the PLP, the professional learning program, was brought in by the Tories, and we're also opposed to the tenor of the relationship the previous government put in place with teachers.

But there is a very practical reason why this legislation should be removed and why this plan should be changed; that is, the plan hasn't worked. As of September 2003, one in five teachers hadn't even registered for even one course, let alone the five or six they needed. Teachers were voting with their feet. They knew that this program that had been put in place was not adequate, was not what they needed, and I certainly agree with the member from Hamilton East when she quotes the statistic that 90% of teachers took part in professional development anyway. That is certainly my experience of teachers. I don't think there is any question that the PLP, as it was put in place by the previous government, was a solution to a problem that didn't exist.

It actually reminds me of another debate that the previous government instigated when they talked about

the need to mandate teacher participation in extracurriculars; again, a solution to a problem that didn't exist. Teachers voluntarily take part in extracurriculars; teachers take part in professional development and always have.

This plan that was put in place by the previous government wasn't working. It was put in in a spirit of punishment and vindictiveness, and it was destined to fail. We said we were going to remove it and replace it, in conversation with teachers, with something that was actually going to work.

I want to talk a little bit about the nature, the complexity, of teaching, because I think that one of the things that happened in the previous regime with the Conservative government was that there was an oversimplification of what teaching is. There was a sense that the activity of teaching could be boiled down to some very simplistic imparting of facts and figures to a child, who is an empty vessel, and that's actually not what happens in teaching. Anyone who has taken the time to read in this field at all will know there's a very complex relationship between a teacher and a student, and there's learning that goes on in that relationship both for the teacher and the student. So whatever evaluation of teachers happens has to recognize that complexity and look at what that relationship is in the classroom. If you suggest that a teacher test or a teacher evaluation can be a simple paper-and-pencil test, after a teacher has been in school for years, or that there is a particular course a teacher or all teachers should take that will capture what a teacher needs to move forward and improve his or her teaching, then I think you've missed the point about what teaching is.

Neil Postman, in his book *The End of Education*, talks about teachers as world-makers, that what teachers do is form the future, because they work with our children and they help those children to think, to develop their critical capacity. In a world where kids are being bombarded by information, by multimedia, it's no small thing to help children develop a critical capacity, to be able to stand back from those media and the messages they're getting every day and say, "OK, what fits with my value system and what doesn't? What do I believe and what do I not believe?" That development of a critical capacity to a large extent of course is in the hands of parents and families, but to a large extent it is in the hands of our teachers, because children are in school for many hours a day. From an early age, we've got to be sure that teachers have the support and mentoring they need to be able to build that relationship.

Teaching can be a very isolating experience. Any of you who have taught will know that it is possible to go into a classroom, close the door and be with the children or the young adults in that classroom, and if you're feeling insecure or you don't have the supports you need, you can develop habits or ways of working with kids that aren't necessarily positive. So what needs to happen in order for teachers to feel supported is that those doors need to be opened, and the administrators, the superintendents and the people who have experience and

knowledge need to be part of that experience with the teacher. That's why mentoring is such a critical part of what needs to happen in professional development.

One of the things the member for Oak Ridges didn't mention was that his government cut the number of professional development days. They brought in the professional learning program but they cut the number of professional development days. One of the important aspects, one of the important ways that teachers can learn from each other, is to have those days with their colleagues in a school. Don't underestimate how important it is, for the learning in a school, to have the teachers able to talk to each other, to know what their common vision is, to share the code of behaviour, to share their consistent disciplinary measures, to share the way they are imparting the vision of that school and of the curriculum to those students. The previous government's cutting of the number of professional development days certainly is not consistent with the belief in strong professional development.

That complexity of the relationship—Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* talks about the nature of teaching in this way: "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students of the teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow." That is not a simple process, it's a complex process, and I think we have to recognize that when we talk about professional development.

The other aspect of the PLP that was seriously problematic was that it was imposed without a discussion with the teachers. This is the 10th anniversary of the Royal Commission on Learning's *For the Love of Learning*. In one of the articles that has been written about that occasion, they talk about teachers needing more autonomy. That was one of their recommendations. The previous government professed to have a lot of respect for the royal commission's recommendations. Imposing on teachers a plan they didn't believe in and didn't think was going to work certainly doesn't speak to respect for the autonomy of teachers and for their professionalism.

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I think the imposition of the PLP, the spirit in which it was imposed, was seriously problematic for teachers in the province. I think it was indicative of how the relationship between the government and teachers was broken and torn in the previous regime. It was distorted to the point where I really worry about some of the kids who were in school for those years, how they perceived that adults got along, how they perceived that governments and teachers related. What was that relationship that was supposed to be supportive? I graduated from high school in 1971. It never occurred to me that the provincial government would be in a battle with teachers at our local school, but that's exactly what the students who grew up in the years between 1995 and 2003 experi-

enced: a provincial government that was in constant battle with the teachers in the schools.

That fear that maybe there was irreparable damage done to those relationships is something we're confronting as a government. We're having to weave back together the fabric of public education in this province, and that is no small task, given the damage that was done by the previous government. One of the ways we're trying to do that is to acknowledge that teachers should have an impact on what their professional development should look like, which has always been the case. Teachers have taken courses, they have developed courses for each other, they've developed them and delivered them within their boards, and they have made it very clear that they are professionals.

We respect that, and we're going to work with them to put in place mentoring programs and an induction year. We're going to look at restoring professional development days. We've already enhanced summer programs. In fact, 7,500 teachers sought last summer to take some of those math and reading instruction programs in order to be ready for literacy and numeracy programs this fall. So already that relationship is being restored. I don't know about the rest of my colleagues—certainly the members across the way—but I go into grade 5 and grade 10 classrooms on a regular basis, because that's where the civics and government curricula are. When I'm talking to the teachers, I sense there is a different tone in the sense that they don't feel besieged. They don't have to worry that every day there is going to be another assault on them. That's a function of our changing the tone and changing the discussion between the provincial government and teachers.

We're consulting with teachers, principals and boards to talk to them about what the best kind of professional development should be. We're not abandoning professional development—quite the contrary. We're going to put professional development in place that has to do with really supporting teachers, not hollow, meaningless, punitive programs.

I'm very happy to be supporting this legislation. I'm happy that we're going to be moving it through, and I look forward to hearing my colleagues on this debate.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I am very much interested in standing today and responding to this comment, but before I start, I just want to set a slightly different tone, as this may be the last time I have an opportunity to thank people in this House, as well as you, Speaker, and extend season's greetings to all. I'll start out with that sort of acquiescent tone that probably sparkles throughout my remarks this afternoon. There will be times, of course, when I digress from that, but I do mean that respectfully to the staff, and to the pages, who are spending their last time here. I hope they've enjoyed the entertainment. But more importantly, I want to thank my staff. I'm very privileged this term to have a legislative intern, Audrey Lemieux, who has been doing research for me on private member's legislation and notices and motions on the order paper. I'm not sure which Liberal

member she'll be working for next time, but I can assure you she's a valued asset in my office. I wish she could stay.

I also want to thank Regan Watts, who's just joined me here at Queen's Park as a new staff person. He's spent some time in Ottawa on various campaigns. Certainly he has made a valued contribution.

Many would know that I'm the energy critic. Laurie Leduc is my policy assistant in that area, and she's doing a remarkable job. I hope she and her three-year-old son, Riley, have a wonderful Christmas with her family.

Also in my riding office, Sheryl, Peter and Fern all provide what I would say is excellent customer service, really. We think of our constituency office as the one window to government where you can actually go and we will listen—not in the partisan sense, but we will listen to your concerns and certainly bring the government to bear. That would be whether I was a member of the government or a member of the opposition.

That small departure from my normal tone will now change, and I caution those who are potentially recording this at home that they may want to turn their recorders off. When I asked for an opportunity to speak on this time allocation motion, one staff person today summed it up best. Julie Kwiecinski, our House leader's assistant and the assistant to the chief party whip, said to me, "It's an egregious assault on democracy." That's a pretty stark and very controversial way to start a discussion, a debate in the House today, but time allocation is the actual motion, and they're time-allocating a bill that's had some traction and some controversy for many, many years.

I have listened to the speakers today, but I want to talk about the substance and nature of this particular motion. They're ramming it through; they're forcing it through. They're truncating debate, and any input has now ceased. They're not willing to listen to anyone.

In the few minutes I have, I can cite a few things, but first of all, what do the current Liberals think about time allocation? Well, this is for the record. This is Dalton McGuinty from Hansard on December 19, 2000, roughly four years ago. Here's what he said at that time: "For a government that promised to be open, this closure action is the height of arrogance, the height of exactly everything you campaigned against and you said you were for." That was Dalton McGuinty. He's the guy who said he was going to bring in transparency and accountability and all these fancy words. In fact, he has rammed through and time-allocated the mother of all time allocated bills last week.

Here is what Dalton said that same day in the same debate on December 19, 2000—I'm quoting. I'll send copies around to all the members here; there are very few Liberals. "I don't care what you people have to say when it comes to this matter. I've got all the answers." Imagine, they've got all the answers. He's got all the questions. This concludes the quote: "I run the government. I run the show." Well, if he's running the government, this is one example today where he has shut down the democratic renewal process itself.

Another person who has a lot to say about barking dogs and things like that is Michael Bryant, in Hansard on May 27, 2002: "I, too, choked when I saw that yet another debate-killing motion was before this Legislature.... They're sometimes called guillotine motions; they're sometimes called closure motions. The technical reference description, so that nobody knows what they are, is time allocation motions."

When in opposition, they said they would never use it. They were outraged any time the government took the time to force legislation through, and that's basically what they do. I would say that Bill 82—I heard the members prior to me speaking, and I just want to draw a little bit of historical reference. Many members here—a good number of them, actually—served some time as school trustees. I was one. I guess I was elected two or three times as a school trustee. As well, I did serve on a provincial body for the trustees' association. I was very much a part of the history. At that time, Sean Conway was the Minister of Education, a very nice gentleman. I was very impressed when I met him then, and I was impressed when I met him after. His row with teachers at that time was the teachers' pension issue. You may remember it was a big issue at the time, settling the teachers' pension plan. There was some dispute about what the liability was. It's actually in quite good shape today, but at the time they implemented that they were just outraged. They were furious. If you want to look to the history, it was probably around 1985, something in that time frame. So it was some time ago, and the battle continues.

1650

If you look at the history and you look at the next government, the NDP government, David Cooke was the Minister of Education for the NDP. He did a formidable job, in my view. I was talking to Mr Cooke the other night and had some chuckles with him because he's the very person—when they implemented the Royal Commission on Learning, Dave Cooke, the NDP Minister of Education, implemented almost everything but never got it into government. Specifically, the teacher testing, I believe, or the Ontario College of Teachers—it was Bill 33 back in those days; 1992, probably, or 1993. That was Bill 33, I recall at the time. I continue to watch these things.

At the end of the day, the organizations representing teachers—I like to respect teachers. I would say that. My wife is a teacher. I know how hard she works and I don't discredit any teacher at all. I think it's the teachers' leadership that needs to tone it down a little bit and realize that it's the role of government to set priorities and to allocate resources to achieve those desired outcomes.

My daughter was a secondary school teacher here in Ontario, now teaching in England—in fact, she'll be coming home for Christmas with her new husband in another week or two when the school year is finished there. I have another daughter who's married with children and lives in Australia. I'm quite familiar with the

different school systems and different approaches around the world.

There's no doubt that what was just said by the prior speaker was that there was some anxiety in teaching when we were in government. Much of that was style as opposed to substance. What I would like to recall is that—it's important to put this on the record. The Royal Commission on Learning was started by David Cooke, the Minister of Education for the NDP. We took those 130-odd recommendations and were implementing them: the college of teachers, the funding of education, the teacher testing model, strengthening the curriculum and reallocating resources equitably across the province. Those were all long-standing, and I can put to you that the battle for the Liberal government and Mr Kennedy has just started.

Why do I say that? There's a very good article in the Toronto Star, which is generally quite friendly to the Liberal government. That's their prerogative to do that. This article is by Ian Urquhart, and here's what is being said. I'm going to cite the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. "Rhonda Kimberley-Young, president of OSSTF, the public secondary school teachers' union, issued a diatribe that questioned Kennedy's motives and declared, 'His actions are not helpful nor do they reflect the respect for educational workers and teachers of which he so often speaks.' I'm surprised and bewildered. But, there again, every Liberal commitment is generally a broken promise."

What did Donna Marie Kennedy, president of OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, say? She "sent a defiant internal memo to her locals assuring them that the minister's letter would not change the union's position: 'Business as usual when it comes to unfettered local bargaining.'"

Emily Noble, from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, was somewhat more conciliatory and said that the college professors got 3.65%. The implication is that they want more.

What has the government said? I want to put on the record in the government's own language that it's important to recognize that they told you—by the way, there was a four-page letter that was sent to the school boards. What it's saying here is, expect a 2% increase. That's what he's telling them.

Not only is that provincial interference in the negotiating process, but it sets a tone here. It says that funding for English as a second language and other programs cannot be used to create bigger pay increases in the collective bargaining. Kennedy proposed that the touchy issue of teacher workload, including prep time in elementary school, be kicked up to what he calls a special provincial bargaining table. Well, there is real provincial interference in the educational system. It's their way or the highway.

I would say he's interfering, because according to this article, some of the boards have already decided on 5% increases. Five per cent increases may be appropriate, I don't know; I'm not in a position to comment directly,

but here's what it costs. This is according to the Liberal Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review issued by Minister Sorbara, and it says here, "Compensation costs and wage settlements are key cost drivers and have a substantial impact on both the finances of broader public sector partners and the province," and the taxpayer. A 1% increase in salary for teachers—1% is the cost annually and cumulatively—is \$119 million a year. Each increase is \$119 million. What they're talking about in the reports I read is a 5% increase. That's getting close to a billion dollars for more wages.

The debate about Bill 82 is substantively this: It's some method of sorting out the very good teachers, who should not be capped by some grid, from those who probably shouldn't be in the profession. That's what this issue's about. You can't pay good teachers enough and you shouldn't pay bad teachers at all. They shouldn't be dealing with our children's future.

As the parent of five children, I think education is paramount. Public education and parent choice are extremely important issues. Today, in a very diverse, multicultural society, we need choices for parents. I understand that's controversial. But what they're saying in this bill is that, clearly, they're acquiescent to the teacher unions, in fear of the provincial negotiations they're undergoing.

In the limited time I have, I wanted to make those few points—referring to the Toronto Star article, referring to the Liberals' own budget—that they cannot afford it. Now, they can afford it and they probably will, and the way they've done it is they've increased taxes. They call it a health premium, a health tax. Every viewer today should write this down: Every income earner in this province will be paying at least \$50 every single month for the health tax, and it will likely go up. They don't call it a tax, they call it a premium. The issue here is, if you're making over a certain amount, you'll be paying up to \$75 or \$80 a month. So if a husband and wife or a couple are working, they'll be paying as much as \$150 per month. I don't think the people of Ontario realize how sad and shocking this tax increase was. It would be fine if it went to health care, but evidence has come to my attention that it's going to everything but health care.

They have an ongoing war. Mr Smitherman today and the city of Peterborough are wrestling with cuts to health care, with women's services. The same thing is happening in Durham, London and Ottawa. The doctors are upset. They rejected their contract. Sixty per cent of the doctors voted against it. Clearly, the tone they have, this kind of avoiding the conflict of it all, is kind and gentle, but the content is troublesome. We're headed—they're headed for the rocks. I say "we're headed" because I live in Ontario too. I'm concerned about stability and the quality of life in this province and I think it's being put at risk after 14 short months or so.

When I asked the Minister of Energy a question today on coal plants, he avoided the answer, which wasn't surprising. It's mismanaged. Energy prices by any measure are going to go up in the order of 20%. People

on fixed incomes whom I represent in my riding of Durham are in for a shocking ride of paying higher taxes and receiving less services.

I'll definitely be voting against this time allocation motion, which is unfair, intrusive and anti-democratic. It's clearly a chance for this government to do the right thing and allow a full debate so that the voices of the people of Ontario are heard.

1700

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): C'est avec plaisir que j'ai la chance cet après-midi d'entrer dans ce débat sur le projet de loi 82, faisant affaire avec la certification des professeurs.

Laissez-moi dire premièrement que sur le concept—pas de problème pour retirer cette loi, que je n'ai jamais supportée quand le gouvernement conservateur l'avait mise en place. Je pensais dans le temps que ces mesures n'étaient pas appropriées et n'étaient pas nécessaires.

Laissez-moi vous expliquer pourquoi. Si la question à cette assemblée est qu'on va demander à ce que chaque métier et chaque profession soit recertifié tous les deux ans ou cinq ans pour quelque raison—et on peut avoir le débat dans cette assemblée. Peut-être que ça fait de bon sens. Par exemple, j'étais électricien par métier. Est-ce que c'est nécessaire pour un électricien de se faire recertifier tous les cinq ans, d'aller prendre des programmes pour être capable d'apprendre les nouvelles technologies dont il peut se servir dans son métier et de se recertifier, dans le sens de garder un certain montant de « training » en place pour être capable de garder au courant ses connaissances du métier? Je dirais que ce n'est pas une méchante affaire si on a une approche qui dit qu'on fait ça pour tous les métiers et pour toutes les professions.

Le problème que j'ai toujours eu avec le projet de loi que les conservateurs avaient mis en place était qu'il visait seulement les professeurs. Moi, j'ai dit, « Écoute, si c'est une question de viser seulement les professeurs, pour moi c'est comme si on essayait d'avoir une bagarre avec les professeurs, et pourquoi les cibler, eux? » Qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait de mal, ce monde-là? Ils ont été qualifiés comme professeurs, ils sont allés à l'école, ils travaillent dans le système scolaire, soit au primaire ou au secondaire, et ils n'ont rien fait de mal, autant que je sache. C'est du monde professionnel qui font un bon job. Pour quelle raison est-ce que le gouvernement conservateur a décidé de dire, « On a besoin de recertifier, mais seulement les profs »?

Mon premier point est recertification; pas un méchant débat. Est-ce qu'on a besoin de cela? Je ne sais pas. C'est quelque chose qu'on pourrait déterminer à un autre moment. Mais dire qu'on va avoir la recertification seulement pour une profession, pour moi, ne fait pas beaucoup de bon sens.

L'autre affaire, et ça me donne la chance parce qu'on parle du domaine de l'éducation, est que le gouvernement provincial, dans ce cas-ci le gouvernement libéral, a mis en place des politiques de transport et a fait des changements à la formule de transport pour les autobus à travers

la province. Monsieur le Président, ce printemps vous avez vu des conseils scolaires autour de la province qui ont dit, « Écoutez, pour certains conseils scolaires il y a eu des réductions assez importantes dans leur budget de transport par autobus, et d'autres conseils scolaires ont eu des augmentations. »

Quand le gouvernement a introduit ces mesures—je pense que c'était au mois de septembre ou octobre, l'année passée—j'ai dit que ça allait causer beaucoup de problèmes, parce qu'une politique que tous les gouvernements provinciaux ont essayé de faire était de ménager une certaine habileté de coopération entre les conseils scolaires. Si c'est ou un conseil scolaire catholique de langue française ou de langue anglaise, ou un conseil scolaire public de langue française ou de langue anglaise, au lieu d'avoir quatre autobus différents qui partent pour ramasser les jeunes le matin, puis les ramènent à la fin de la journée, si on avait un système de transports en commun pour tous les étudiants dans la municipalité ou dans la région, on n'aurait pas besoin d'envoyer quatre autobus.

Cela a commencé l'année passée, avec le conseil à Timmins. Timmins a été le premier conseil dans la province de l'Ontario—ça fait déjà 20, 25 ans—à décider d'unifier leur système d'autobus scolaires pour s'assurer une coopération entre les conseils scolaires. Le gouvernement conservateur a dit, quand il est venu au pouvoir, qu'on avait besoin de mettre en place des politiques pour être capable d'augmenter la coopération entre les conseils de la province. Avec ça il y a eu certains conseils dans la province, où il n'y avait pas de collaboration en transport, qui ont fallu le faire avec le temps à cause de la loi et les politiques que le gouvernement conservateur avait mises en place.

J'ai dit à cette Assemblée que, comme je l'ai dit aux médias, quand le gouvernement libéral—M. McGuinty et M. Kennedy—a décidé de changer la politique et le financement pour les autobus scolaires, cela pourrait causer des problèmes, dans le sens qu'une certaine coopération allait être éliminée. Je me rappelle, quand j'ai posé la question au ministre dans l'Assemblée, qu'il m'a dit, « Ne vous inquiétez pas; il va toujours y avoir une coopération. » Je suis ici pour dire qu'à Timmins, cela est déjà arrivé: le conseil catholique de langue française a décidé de donner son propre service à ses étudiants. Pourquoi? Parce qu'eux autres, avec la nouvelle formule de financement, n'ont pas eu plus et ils ont décidé, comme conseil, qu'ils pourraient donner un meilleur service eux-mêmes que de le faire avec la coopération des autres conseils. Cela veut dire que les autres conseils auront besoin de se réorganiser pour le transport par autobus.

Tout ce que je dis est que le gouvernement n'aurait pas dû jouer avec la formule de financement de la manière qu'elle l'a fait, parce que cela a créé, quant à moi, le commencement d'un problème dans notre système. Au lieu d'avoir de la coopération pour des autobus à travers la province, on commence à voir, tel qu'à Timmins, des séparations de service où il y avait déjà une intégration.

So, like I said, I believe the government was wrong in changing the policy on school busing. I said in French just a few minutes ago that the policy and the funding formula the government changed this fall have, as I said last fall, led to certain school boards across the province unlinking the co-operation that existed between the four school boards in general areas.

In the city of Timmins, we've seen it happen already. Some school boards have been winners and some have been losers as a result of that and other issues that existed for a fairly long time within the in-common busing policies they have. In our case, the French Catholic school board has decided to go it alone for their own reasons: (1) because they can afford to do it and (2) because they think they can provide a better service. But the point is that rather than having an integrated school bus system for all four boards in the area, you now have one for the French Catholic kids and one for the other three, and who knows where that's going to lead? All I'm saying is, once the government started mucking around with the funding formula the way they did, they caused this problem.

It has always been the policy of the government of Ontario, no matter who was in power, to try to bring school boards together when it came to transportation. To the credit of the Conservatives, at least they put a policy in place that made that happen in places where it didn't happen in the past. With this change of funding formula that the Liberals have put in place under Dalton McGuinty and Mr Kennedy, we're now seeing an uncoupling of that co-operation, and I think that's a sad thing.

I also want to say to my friends here in the House—it is an education debate, and I have an opportunity to speak a little bit about native education in northern Ontario. I just want to remind members of a comment that was in the papers about a month ago, where the federal auditor was musing out loud about how there was no accountability within the native education system and how we were not getting the kind of results we should be getting for the amount of money we're spending, and then she said, "Well, maybe we need to do something about how we spend our money." At the time, I just came back into the House and I was appalled by the comments of the federal auditor, because it demonstrated to me a complete lack of understanding of what the issues are in First Nations communities across this province and, I dare say, in some cases across this country.

We have a situation in Ontario where the federal government funds native education, both at the primary and secondary levels. In funding that system, the federal government does not have the capacity, in my view, to offer the kind of assistance that the Ministry of Education, provincially, is able to give local education authorities—school boards, as we know them in our communities, but in native communities they're called local education authorities. All the federal government really does is transfer money. It does not provide the kind of support that I think they need to give to local edu-

cation authorities and local communities to be able to deal with the running of their schools. For example, special-needs education: If there's an argument to be made for anywhere in this province that we need funding for special-needs education, it is certainly within some of our First Nations communities. But there's hardly any assistance in current funding formulas federally to be able to respond to the needs of children, parents and communities when it comes to special-needs education in First Nations communities. The federal government, quite frankly, is missing in action.

I say it's high time that we have a debate in this province with our First Nations friends and with the federal government to look at whether it's time that we transfer education in native communities to the province. It seems to me that the province does a much better job, compared to what the federal government does. I know my good friend Mr Levac, the whip from the government side, agrees with me. He has six First Nations in his riding. He deals with First Nations. I know he's well respected by the people in that area, because I've met with some of his native leaders. They understand, as we do, that they just have to look at the provincial system in neighbouring communities and compare it to the communities within the native reserves, and there is a real difference as far as services. In some cases, the capital infrastructure might be in good shape; in other cases, it might be godawful, as it is in Attawapiskat, which I talked about in another debate.

1710

My point is this: It seems to me that if we want to give First Nations kids the ability to compete within our society, we have to give them the same tools that every other child has. One of the ways you can do that, one of the more direct ways, is to make sure that children have a good education system. It is the province that develops the curriculum that First Nations schools follow. It is the province that drives everything that happens in education in Ontario. Why wouldn't we sit down with First Nations and the federal government to look at finally transferring education over to provincial responsibility?

Does that mean the federal government should get off the hook? Absolutely not. The federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to First Nations, and we would need to have some mechanism to make sure that money stays in place. But it would then allow us to augment the system with monies from the province to make the education system better for First Nations kids.

The other issue, and the one that really upset me with the federal auditor, not the Provincial Auditor, was a complete lack of understanding of what the societal and family issues are that give rise to the poor performance in schools on the part of kids in a lot of our First Nations communities. You just need to travel. In many of the First Nations there is high unemployment. A community with good employment numbers has about 80% unemployment. Can you imagine, in this day and age in a modern community and a modern society, that when a First Nations community has 80% unemployment it's

considered good, as far as performance? There are no economic opportunities in many of these communities. They're pretty far away from where the main commercial centres are and where, basically, most of the jobs are. There are reserves that have been put far away, out of sight, out of mind, and there's not a lot of opportunity there.

In my household, I look at our two daughters, Julie and Nathalie, who are 27 and 22. I think I got the ages right. Both have excelled. Both have done really well in school. Both have gone off to university. My eldest daughter has actually gone back to university and is taking a nurse practitioner's program. The youngest one is here in Toronto. I have to say something about Natalie, because if I don't she'll give me heck. But the point I make is this: They know that once they finish school there is employment waiting for them. That's a huge incentive: being able to give kids a will to do well in school and to excel. But if you're a child living on a reserve—let's say Martin Falls. Does anybody here know where Ogoki is? I bet you most people don't. I don't expect you to know, but that's my point, right? Ogoki is up in the northwestern part of my riding.

Interjection: Don't assume I don't—

Mr Bisson: I'm sure you do know some.

My point is this: We don't know a lot about First Nations and where those communities are and what the conditions are. The finance committee was out travelling. Pat Hoy, as the Chair, travelled with me, along with the rest of the committee, across northern Ontario into some of the reserves. It was a real eye-opener to people. They said, "Oh, my God, people are actually living in these conditions?" They couldn't believe it.

All I'm saying is, imagine being a child living in Ogoki, Peawanuck or Fort Severn, where there is 90% unemployment. How do you encourage children to learn and to grow and to really do well in the education system when they don't have a lot to look forward to when it comes to education? It seems to me it's a huge problem. So I think the federal auditor misses part of what makes an education system work, and that is a healthy community when it comes to employment.

What also makes an education system work is a healthy community when it comes to the societal issues within a community and how that community functions. We have the residential school syndrome. A lot of people sometimes glaze over and say, "What are you talking about?" Two generations of adults were either sexually, physically or mentally abused by the residential school system; I'm not saying everybody who was in the system, but a great majority. In fact, there was a conference in Timmins just a couple of weeks ago; I was talking to some of the people who attended in regard to the lawsuit that is currently going on with the Anglican and Catholic churches.

The point is this: You have a whole generation of people my age, people a little bit older and a little bit younger than me, who went through the residential school system and, quite frankly, lost their parenting

skills as a result of those schools. I tell the story of a friend of mine from Peawanuck who was snatched on Sutton Lake at the age of six—snatched. The child was out there with his mum and dad. They were living off the land. An airplane with skis called the Beaver landed on the lake. They grabbed Mike, put him inside the plane and took him away. The kid never came back for 10 years. That was his experience. So this poor child, snatched away from his family at the age of six—can you imagine?—was put in residential school. What his experiences are I will not talk about in this House, just to say that he had some problems in regard to how the residential school system dealt with him. He has actually turned out quite well, but many other people did not, because of the experience they lived with in these residential schools. By the time they were back in their communities, they were young adults at 18, 19 or 20 years old who had never seen parenting. They didn't have role models to base parenting on because they were not raised by parents; they were raised by either the Anglican or the Catholic church within residential schools. So those poor children grew up, became parents themselves, were dysfunctional because of their experiences, many times had alcohol abuse and in some cases drug abuse, and had problems parenting themselves. So the next generation that came behind had difficulties, and it's manifested itself back into the community with all kinds of issues.

All I say is, imagine how a school system runs when you have those kinds of problems in your community, on top of 90% unemployment. So I say we have a long way to go when it comes to helping kids in First Nations communities with education. But I think one of the steps we need to take is first of all to recognize what the problem is. Once we recognize what it is, we're able to deal with it. We have to give First Nations the tools they need to help themselves.

I am convinced and I am of the view that the federal government is doing an awful job. It's not going to get any better. They've been at it for over 100 years. They have not done anything good that I've seen. Come and visit any community in my riding and you'll see it.

I think the province has to engage itself in some kind of debate with First Nations communities to look at how we can play a much more positive role in assisting First Nations to develop a better education system for kids in those communities. Maybe one day young children on reserves will be able to look forward and think about what is possible and contribute back into their community and the province when it comes to this wonderful province we live in.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I'm pleased to stand and speak about the time allocation for Bill 82, the status of the professional learning program. Everybody has stood up and actually spoken in terms of how it impacts and affects the teachers, and there is no question that it does. But I think the real focus we should be concentrating on is exactly what this does and should do for the student—and it doesn't do a darned thing. In

fact, it wasn't designed really thoroughly on how it impacts the student. It was a hastily designed piece of legislation because the government of the day was in a contest with the teachers' unions, and it was a little bit of "let's get back" as opposed to "let's develop."

Having said that, that's done. That's the reason why it needs to be repealed. You really need to sit back and engage the people who teach the students in the process of how you go about professional learning. There's absolutely no question in anybody's mind. I've never met somebody who wanted to be a poor teacher. They all went into teaching because of their love of children and because they want to do the very best they can in their profession. But like all professions, it grows, it evolves, it changes. There are new ways of teaching. There are new curricula. You can't live in a vacuum; you must constantly have professional development. If you don't, then you impact the child you're supposed to be teaching, the student. Whether it's at a kindergarten level or at a grade 12 level, it really doesn't make any difference.

The challenge is, how do you engage the teachers in the process in a meaningful way that makes a difference in their own professional lives, so that it becomes the student, the parent and the teacher all working together on behalf of the students themselves?

That's the part that wasn't in this particular bill. In fact, all it simply said was, "Go out and get 14 credits—seven in core and seven in elective—over a five-year period of time," and then you would be certified. But that didn't deal with issues around—I mean, you could be certified in rock climbing, for all that mattered. It was an elective. That didn't indicate how it impacted, changed and evolved into better teaching practices to impact the child in the classroom. That's what you need to do with professional learning.

That's what businesses do when they invest a huge amount of money—and businesses do, more in other countries than in Canada—around professional learning. They sit down with their employees, they look at their needs and goals, and then they develop the programs that impact those employees so that they can impact the business for that company. That's really the same as we're doing, or what we should be doing, with students. You need to be able to sit down and say, "What are the goals we wish to achieve and how do we achieve those goals with the professional staff we have?"

To suggest that we just have a few professional days and that would do it is really wrong, I think. Learning is lifelong, and ongoing on a day-to-day basis. So as the teacher is assessing the child in terms of what the child is learning—and every teacher assesses on a daily basis different kinds of assessment tools to evaluate how the student is doing—that same teacher, in essence, is evaluating themselves. A good teacher knows when they require additional professional learning and engages that. Usually, it happens after school: after 4, sometimes in the evenings, often on weekends and very often during the summer months, when everybody thinks teachers have holidays.

1720

We know that how children learn is different. Literacy, for example: The benchmarks for literacy have changed significantly over the last few years, and how we engage teachers to teach literacy, especially to children with English as a second language, is quite different from teaching children who already have English as their first language. How we teach children who have English as a second dialect is much different from how you teach children with English as a second language or English as a first language.

Teachers need to be taught those things. Many of them are not taught in the colleges. A really good example of that is around special education. Special education is not, per se, taught to any great extent in teachers' colleges. Most of that is learned on the job through professional training in the school boards.

What I think we've made a huge mistake about is not investing in that professional development in a significant way. If you look at a very large school board, or any school board, for that matter, and you look at the amount of money that's been allocated toward professional development, you'll find it's maybe \$1.50 per teacher. It's a ridiculous amount of money. They've been very creative, actually, in how they've got around their professional development. But, in fact, if you want to have an impact, then you have to invest in that employee, and the best way to invest in that employee is to sit down with the employee and look to the goals the employee wants to achieve: Are they consistent with the goals that you want to achieve in that school? That's how you engage a professional development program, and most school boards have them.

Now, what happened in the last few years is that we haven't had the best relationship with teachers. Sometimes we get confused, because the teachers' unions have their job; they have their role to play and they do play it. But the teacher in the classroom, as someone said, is often isolated and needs that consultant to come in, needs the professional evaluation that a principal is to do. It's their responsibility, or the vice-principal's, or ultimately a supervisory officer's, to ensure that what's happening in that classroom is affecting properly the learning of that student.

The best way, as I said, is to sit down, to engage the teachers, for example, in a staff room. A principal often will sit down and say to the school, "What are the goals in our school and what is it we wish to achieve? Is it literacy? Is it numeracy? Do we have to have more engagement with those students in co-curricular activities? What is it that we need to do as a school?" It will be different in Cornwall from Wawa, in Ottawa from Windsor. It doesn't make any difference. The fact remains that the children are different in different communities. So then they sit down and work out together the initiatives that they wish to achieve, how they put in place the professional development for those teachers to achieve them and how they engage either inside or outside support services to make that happen.

Sometimes there's a province-wide initiative, such as literacy, where the province will say, "We'll give you X number of dollars, and then you develop a program around literacy in your school that meets your needs." If you go to schools where this works, it really works. The reason is, it's not punitive. They're not saying to the teacher, "You're no good—and by the way, I want you to teach this curriculum, even though you're no good." They're saying to the teachers, "You have the basics, you have the understanding, you have the ability to learn, you have the ability to engage that student, and we're going to give you additional resources to make that happen."

That's how you engage the teachers themselves in the process so that it isn't a punitive measure. Then you get good professional development. It's a real win-win for the students, as opposed to sitting back and saying, "I think we'll just impose these seven mandatory elective credits here. Regardless of what they are, you're certified. End of discussion." That isn't how it works. It can't work that way, because it's in separation or isolation from the students that the teachers themselves are teaching.

When you look, as well, at the standards, the College of Teachers is one of the areas where they could actually meet the criteria for imposing certification. But there were, in fact, other areas that were interested in looking at whether or not they could be certified as well: The Ontario curriculum learning centre was one; the Ontario Principals' Council was another. Professional development is not isolated just to teachers. Vice-principals, chairs, principals, supervisory officers, and for that matter directors and trustees, all need professional development if they are going to continue to evolve with those students. Even physics has changed. You can't rely on what you knew before. You have to constantly engage in what's new. Even the benchmarks that children are identified with are new. There are new benchmarks to help us know how children learn differently.

As a parent, what is it you'd really like? You want to make sure that the teacher in the classroom with your student is the very best teacher, and you want to make sure that your student, along with those other students in that classroom, is doing well. They're really not particularly interested in the school down the street or across the road or in Victoria or wherever; it's their child and their school at this time, and they want to make sure that child is succeeding and learning to go on to the next level of education.

So our responsibility as a government, and school boards' responsibility, is to ensure that that teacher who has core competencies continually has access to good professional development that they feel engaged in, and not that it's punitive and sort of put on them as a step, that they have to do it whether or not it impacts what's happening in their classroom or in their particular school.

As I said, you know, the schools are really quite different. If you go across the province, some of them have extraordinary homogeneity in terms of their ethnicity; others may have 50 different countries that are en-

gaged in the one school. Some schools have a high focus on literacy; others will have it on numeracy. Some are really engaged in computer literacy or the environment. I mean, there's just a whole slew of different opportunities that are out there. So the cookie stamp doesn't work for everybody. You have to be able to say, how do you engage that teacher in that school to make an impact on those students at this time? It's not all that difficult, and the best way to do it is to engage the teachers themselves in the process to begin with. It's a little bit of, you get more with honey than do you with vinegar.

I think if people were really honest, they'd really look at the bill, the professional learning program, and they'd recognize that it really had very little to do with students, as I said earlier, and a great deal to do with getting back at the teachers, in many respects.

You think about it: We give our children to teachers for five hours every day. You want the very best—absolutely—and you need to engage them. Would you give your child to somebody you didn't feel cared, or didn't want to teach them properly, or couldn't engage them or didn't listen to their challenges, or who said, "Well, it's either my way or the highway. I don't care how you learn. I only teach one way"? Of course not.

What's really important is that you have to provide all of the tools for those teachers to be able to teach the different kinds of students that we have in our classrooms today. That isn't rocket science; it really isn't. It's just sitting down with folks, determining where you want to go, engaging them in the process—yes, putting a little money behind it, but making sure that it happens and always remembering to keep that student at the very focus of what it's all about.

Years ago, there was a report called the Jackson report. In essence, it said the education system exists—and it does—but it exists because there are students at the very centre of it. Take away the students and you don't have an education system. You can have teachers galore, but you need those students. So the students must always be the focus of everything you do.

We always used to say, if it isn't in the best interests of students, don't do it. As a good teacher, you intuitively know what's good for students. A good teacher doesn't mind being assessed, not at all. A good teacher looks for professional development, and yes, there are people where we need to encourage more professional development, but again, there are many ways to approach that without being hurtful or spiteful. There are many ways to improve somebody's teaching. There are good, bad and ugly in all kinds of professions—it's not restricted—but the vast majority of the people I've met in the teaching profession are phenomenal individuals who are there for the right reasons.

So as you move forward, for me, it's how you engage them and how you make them a part of the process, as opposed to part of the problem. How do you say, "We value our children so much that we give you our children for so many hours a day and, therefore, we value and respect you as well"? That's the other part that has been missing for some time. I think when you look back, of all

the things that all of us take some responsibility for, it's the disrespect of the profession.

You think about some of the things that happen in schools today. It's not the same world it was. It's not filled with Suzie Sunshines. Our children are very challenged. They have a lot of difficulties in their lives, and yet those teachers are there, caring, teaching, doing the very best they can, and sometimes under some extreme circumstances; and yet, every day they come.

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I think it's our responsibility to constantly provide that moral support for them. That doesn't negate the fact that they're still professionals; that they still must themselves learn, and they still must have a standard that's very high. We expect that of our children; of course we expect that of the teachers themselves. Children will rise to that standard if the teacher has it. In order for the teacher to feel valued, for the teacher to be able to give out to that standard, then they must be respected for their profession and respected because we believe enough in them to give them our children, as I said, for five hours every day.

I can remember when children would be standing outside of the door at 7 o'clock in the morning waiting to get in because they were latchkey kids. They were waiting at the one place that was safe for them, and that was the school. Think about it. They felt safe there because they felt nurtured inside that school and cared for. The people who were there often were the ones who put their hand in their pocket and bought the muffins and bought the juice and came back with the mittens when the kids didn't have the mittens or the boots. Those are the people we need think about when we think about how we engage them in a professional learning program. It can't be punitive; nothing works when it's punitive. It has to be a part of what they themselves see moving forward in terms of professional development. I think we can do it. If you work together, it's amazing what you can do. You park your baggage at the door, you sit down and you really say what it is we want to achieve and how we want to get there, always keeping the students in mind. So I'm pleased.

The issue of time allocation is simply because it shouldn't be here in the first place. I think somebody earlier said that. It really didn't deserve to be here because I think its intent was not to promote how students learn, but rather to put a bit of a curse on the teachers themselves. I think that was wrong. I'm pleased this is moving forward, and I look forward to the vote.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to join this debate today on the time allocation motion dealing with Bill 82. I listened quite closely to the member for Etobicoke Centre, and I appreciate her comments. She's clearly given a lot of time to this issue.

For me, this has never been about a battle with the teachers. I would concede that perhaps there were some problems between the previous government and the teachers' unions, because obviously the teachers' unions didn't like what they were doing. As far as the issue of

teacher testing, she touched upon things that are very important and the fact that we do trust our children to these professionals for a big part of their lives. I think it is important that those people are the best they can be. How we get there, I suppose we could debate that issue for some time, but I do agree that some of the most important people in children's lives—certainly in my children's lives—are the teachers they've had. We have had some fantastic ones, but I must also say that we have had some who have been not so good. But the ones who have been really good have been unbelievable, and the effect they've had on my children has been remarkable. I do appreciate that. My brother Martin is a teacher as well. I've been approached by people on many occasions who have said that Martin changed their lives. So I appreciate the effect that he has had on people as well. My mother was a teacher by profession, so I do have a little background there.

I don't have a lot of time, and I want to share some of this time with my colleague from Erie-Lincoln. I want to talk about some of the other problems in the education ministry that are not being addressed. In my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, transportation funding is a huge problem. I met with members of the transportation committee of the board and members of the school bus operators on Friday evening this past week, on December 10. I'll tell you, they've got a mess and I think it is so important that the Minister of Education sit down and come up—I know they sent out a draft funding formula that they've now made changes to and it's just not going to work. They have got to respect the needs of rural people in coming up with these funding formulas.

Our bus operators are the lowest-paid in the province. Our fleet is the oldest, because the operators can't afford to buy new vehicles. They don't get paid enough. There really has to be some work done to address the funding problem when it comes to rural transportation. Now they're talking about cutting 84 buses next year. We're going to have little kids who are going to be asleep when they get to school because they've had to leave home so early. They're going to be asleep on the bus when they come home because they've been on it so long after they've left school. I don't know if that's the best way to be sending our kids to school. If they're that long on the school bus, maybe they're not in the best condition to be learning when they get there. If we cut all of these routes, that's exactly what we're going to be doing. We're going to be having children on the bus far too long for their own educational benefit.

I really want to see the minister take a good, hard look. I sent him a letter today. I hope he's prepared to meet with me and members of the board and the school bus operators at the earliest possible time, because this is something that needs to be discussed, and needs to be discussed right away.

I am going to end my portion of the debate now, because I know my friend from Erie-Lincoln wants to finish this off. I will be voting against the motion because time allocation is something that this government was totally against and now, all of a sudden, they embrace it.

Mr Brownell: I rise this afternoon to participate in this debate on the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act.

I would like to honour my daughter with a few words that I have to say this afternoon for, as of this Friday, she will be a full-fledged teacher, with all the responsibilities and privileges of teaching in Ontario.

Applause.

Mr Brownell: Yes, I am indeed proud of Alison. She has worked hard. She thought her first love was nursing, but having seen her father spend 32 and a half years in the classroom, decided that that's really—and with the encouragement of her family and her husband. She's quite excited about that.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): And her grandmother likes that too.

Mr Brownell: Her grandmother, who will be watching right now, will be absolutely excited for me to recognize her here in the House.

Interjection.

Mr Brownell: That's right. She was here last Thursday and certainly enjoyed her afternoon in the House.

I want to speak about this in the context of what teachers are saying. Teachers in Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, in the Upper Canada District School Board, are constantly saying to me, "What has become of or where is this Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act deal?" So I told them. Yesterday, I had breakfast at the Water's Edge Diner at Long Sioux and I met a teacher there. In fact, he was the teacher who took over from me in my classroom in 2000. I was so delighted to hand over a classroom to a young teacher who was excited about teaching but who, after getting into the profession, saw this rule that was put in where he had to take learning programs. He had worked his darnedest at university and at teachers' college to learn, get tested and become the teacher he wanted to be. He did that, but he felt he should have the responsibility of going out there and learning and not having it forced.

I say the same thing. I spent 20 years in university. After that, I spent two summers at Queen's University taking a principal's course. Nobody forced me; I did it on my own. I took those masters degree programs in education because I felt they would help me, but I also wanted to get a degree. Those are the programs that teachers have been doing all along. I've seen that. When I started teaching in 1969, I saw teachers who encouraged me to go out and take those professional programs. That's called mentoring—those teachers who did that. I had some wonderful mentors in my early career.

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Just this past month I went to the funeral of a teacher colleague who had passed away, and I remember going up to talk to her son. I taught grade 8; she taught kindergarten. I probably learned more about the profession through a mentoring process from Joan Mack than, I believe, I learned from any other teacher. I told her son that. Joan Mack didn't need those demands from a government saying, "You have to go out and take those courses." She went out and took the courses on her own.

She encouraged others to do so. In fact, she encouraged me to do what I did in teaching. It was a great feeling, from my heart, to talk to her son about what that mentoring process was all about.

That's what my colleague from Don Valley West talked about, the mentoring that goes on in schools. We don't have to have courses driven by a government program to force on teachers, who are already overloaded with new curriculum, who are overloaded with all the responsibilities of doctoring, nursing and everything else in schools, who are overloaded with trying to put a library in their classroom when a library had to be taken out; teachers who are trying to teach design and technology in the classroom where these full-fledged design and tech shops were taken out.

These are the teachers who don't need another assault on them with professional learning programs. They need to be encouraged; they need to be mentored. They need to be encouraged by those who represent them here at Queen's Park by saying, "Go for the gold." If we want them to hold our children, our students, on a pedestal, we have to hold our teachers on a pedestal. What happened in the past—and I was there. I was there during the Tory regime. I was there when the Ernie Eves cuts to education investment forced 25 school boards to cancel junior kindergarten, 23 boards to reduce special education programs, 44 boards to reduce transportation services and 42 boards to cut custodial maintenance budgets. I was there when the Ernie Eves government cut more than \$1 billion from education in the first two years, including \$145 million in cuts from junior kindergarten. I look at classroom spending: \$163 million in cuts. I was there.

Mr Leal: That's why they sent you to Queen's Park: to turn it around.

Mr Brownell: You're right, member for Peterborough. Exactly. I retired in December 2000, the same time that my daughter is coming on. I'm hoping that the same opportunities open up for her, that there will be this opportunity. When I saw that young fellow, a graduate of Lakehead University, come back to mentor in my classroom in the fall—he had spent April of 2000 in my classroom to practise teaching. When I saw in the fall that he needed—and he should have—a full-time job, and that I could get out, I said, "Here's an opportunity."

The assaults there were on those teachers in the past have to stop, and I know that we have an education minister who has said that those assaults will stop. We've already done something about it. It wasn't that long ago that I opened up the Glengarry News, that great newspaper published in Alexandria, in my good friend Jean-Marc Lalonde's riding of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. The principal of Williamstown Public School talked about the pupil-teacher ratios in the primary grades. Do you want to know? They're on track there. We talked about having reduced class sizes in the primary grades. It's happening. I see it in my community, in my riding. My teachers are talking about it and my principals are talking about it. I saw it in the headlines in the news-

paper. In fact, I cut it out and I have it in a scrapbook at home.

These are the things that we will do, and we will continue to do, to put teachers on a pedestal so that, in turn, teachers can go into the classrooms and put those children on pedestals. I had 32 and a half years of doing that with kids, 32 and a half years of absolute joy. I look at my daughter and I encourage her to go out there and have absolute joy in a classroom. But with the assaults that were there in the past on educators—and it wasn't pleasant—it was discouraging for teachers. It was discouraging for some of the old-timers. And I was an old-timer; I was towards the end of my career. It was very difficult, but I kept encouraging those young teachers who came on staff. I continued to encourage them and to say to them, "There is hope. There is light at the end of the tunnel. There is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow."

I say to those who are watching and to those from my riding, I am here speaking because you sent me here. You said, "As a teacher, you have something to contribute here in the House," and I'm glad I'm able to speak on this.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise—well, I'm not really pleased to rise to speak.

Interjection: You're never pleased.

Mr Hudak: I usually am, but you keep throwing these time allocation motions at us. For the third consecutive time I've risen in the House it's a time allocation motion all over again. It's been the last week plus: time allocation motion after time allocation motion after time allocation motion.

I say to the Minister of Transportation, I'd expect you guys to follow—at one point, I'd expect you to follow your promises, to do, once elected, what you promised before you were elected, but I no longer have that expectation. I think it's probably the opposite.

I remember when in cabinet we had a red tape test to ensure that red tape was reduced to the minimum possible in every initiative coming through cabinet. I think now they have the same check box that says, "How can we break this promise?" and you can't get something passed through cabinet unless it breaks at least one Dalton McGuinty or Liberal promise.

I find it interesting too that the Liberals are ramming through this particular time allocation motion to do with teacher testing. If there was a time allocation motion, you'd think it would underlie some type of urgency, but as far as I know, there is no replacement system the Minister of Education has come up with for teacher testing. In fact, I think there are a number of initiatives here that will bear further scrutiny by this Legislature.

First of all, the Liberals are watering down considerably the standards in the classroom. The literacy test has been reduced and is lowering standards that a student would need to pass to graduate from high school; eliminating teacher testing in the province of Ontario; and then, I read this weekend, eliminating the introductory test to see if a teacher who graduates from teachers' college is qualified to do the job or not.

Then, of course, the Minister of Education's promise to turn the College of Teachers, which is supposed to be there as a regulatory and disciplinary body over individual teachers to make sure there are high standards in the classroom—regrettably, the minister is turning that over to the control of the unions. So you would have your OTF umbrella and the groups underneath it and then you have the College of Teachers with the majority of members being in the union. I have no doubt that this is payback. The teachers' unions had funded considerably the Liberal campaigns. In fact, the very nasty advertisements that were used, the very negative advertisements in support of the Liberal campaign, were funded largely by the teachers. I think a lot of this is simply payback to their friends during the election campaign.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate has expired. Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion 294. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

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ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting the consideration of concurrences and the Supply Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is there consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, government orders 10 through 21, inclusive, and order G160, second reading of Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, may be called concurrently; and

That when such orders are called, there shall be one hour allotted for concurrent consideration in a single debate of all of these orders, which time shall be divided equally among the recognized parties; and

That at the conclusion of the debate the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for each of the ministries named in government orders 10 through 21, inclusive, and to dispose of all remaining stages of Bill 60.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

SUPPLY ACT, 2004

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2004

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Speaker, I move concurrence in supply for the following ministries:

Ministry of Finance
Ministry of Health and Long-term Care
Ministry of Energy
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of Children and Youth Services
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Transportation
Ministry of Agriculture and Food
Ministry of the Environment
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

I move second reading of Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Debate? Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Just to spend a very few moments on supply, as you know, sir, and as my friends over on the other side know, this is the bill that gives the members of this Parliament—they authorize the expenditures that really finance the government for the whole year, so it is a kind of momentous occasion when we vote supply.

This evening, however, given the fact that the House leader has done such a magnificent job in organizing the business of this Legislature—and I have to say that the difference with the way in which this place ran for the eight years under the previous administration is night and day. This applies to the supply bill as well. So given that the House leader, my friend the Minister of Energy, the member from Windsor-St Clair, is looking to have a lot of the business of this House wrapped up this evening, I would like to use this minute to express my appreciation to the estimates committee, which has done work examining a variety of expenditures from a variety of ministers, and as well to the people in the Ministry of Finance, Management Board and the financial administration of each ministry.

Putting together the province's budget is not an easy exercise. Although we have our differences politically, in a sense we're all involved in this together. The supply bill gives us an opportunity, collectively, to say, "We've done our homework. We've reviewed the expenditures. The policies of the government are reflected in those expenditures." And it gives us all an opportunity to put our own imprimatur and vote on that. As Minister of Finance, it's a kind of completion of an exercise that really takes us through the entire financial year.

In conclusion, might I just say that I am particularly proud of a number of things this supply motion does. The new investments it makes in health care: We've had lots of debate in this House during question period and during debate on other issues, but the new investments in health care are extremely important. The significant investment in education, beginning a transformation of our education system right from JK to grade 12, is what this supply bill really funds.

Finally, there are a few other things in the budget, and therefore in this supply motion, that give me particular satisfaction. I think of what we were able to do in the budget for seniors on fixed incomes, many of whom said, "We support you, but you have to realize that it's becoming very difficult to keep our homes with the rising costs of such and such." In the budget, we were able to give a seniors' tax credit of \$125, a 25% increase in that credit. That's \$125 in the hands of seniors of modest income to help with the burden of property taxes and the maintenance of homes.

The other thing that I think was very important is the fact that we initiated major changes in the way we do business in this Legislature dealing with financial acts. I think of the Audit Act that we've now passed, which gives us an Auditor General and dramatically changes the powers of the auditor so that he or she can investigate all the agencies that receive taxpayers' money. I think of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act that we voted on in this House this very day, and I can't believe that the opposition actually voted against this bill.

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): Oh, I can believe it.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs says he can believe it. Perhaps, given the voting record, that is the case. The fact that we passed that bill today and that we will change forever the way we monitor our expenditures and the way we report our expenditures is just one other element of the budget, of the estimates process and of supply that should be noted.

I just want to thank all the members of the Legislature for participating in the debate on the province's expenditures, and I expect that we will be voting, I hope unanimously, for this supply bill.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this evening and talk about the concurrence motions. I would like to support some of the motions that were put through; there's no question about that. But I'm afraid that what's really been bothersome, from our caucus's position, is the fact that so many of these pieces of legislation have been rammed through using time allocation in the last five or six weeks.

What it really boils down to is that time allocation has been used in this House for the last decade or so, and there's no question that other governments have used that. But this government, the Dalton McGuinty government, promised not to use any more time allocation. That was part of their mandate and part of what they talked about: It would never happen. Of course, we're now seeing it on a regular basis, and I fully expect that we will see time allocation for the next five sessions until 2007.

Bill 106 and Bill 149—unbelievable. You did two budget bills on the same day, and third reading for one hour between the two of them. It's pretty sad. And the Minister of Finance stands over there today and brags about how pleased he is with the way this House has performed. I think, yes, when you start doing two budget bills and time-allocating in the same afternoon, when

there were a lot of speakers in the opposition who still wanted—we only had a few speakers speak to those two bills. We didn't ring any bells or anything like that. There was a lot of debate on that. A lot of our caucus members wanted to speak to those two particular pieces of legislation. That was extremely disappointing to us.

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The fact is that we believe in fiscal responsibility, and these two bills certainly dealt the province of Ontario a huge blow. I think of things like the removal—

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: I didn't heckle you, Mr Finance Minister, but you're going to heckle me. That's fine; you go ahead.

To the Minister of Finance: I cannot believe you removed the tax credit for the new home ownership program. That was a program that you know worked well and that we know worked well, and now it's gone. For all these young people who want to buy their first home, that'll now be gone to them. That \$2,500 a year, or whatever that amount of money was, is now removed. That would have bought them washers and dryers and furniture, or maybe deposits on certain things, yet it's now gone. We know and the Minister of Finance knows that we are now seeing projections that there will be a decline in the number of homes built in the province, at a time when we probably need that. That's one thing that really bothered me about the legislation.

On a positive note, though, I support the apprenticeship tax credit. I'm a very strong supporter of that because I come from a construction background in business. I talked to former Premier Eves and Elizabeth Witmer about that during our leadership. We put it in as part of our platform, as well. So the apprenticeship tax credit is something that I'm in favour of.

I just want to say something else positive, because I know that we're in the spirit of Christmas. I do want to thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services, who came up to the riding of Simcoe North today. I want to put this on the record. She announced the children's treatment centre for York region and the county of Simcoe. It's a win-win story for everybody.

Minister, I'm directing my comments to you right now: I'm saying, on a very positive note, how pleased I was that that announcement was made today. The county of Simcoe and York region was the only area left in the province without children's treatment services. We have a great team of people working in both York region and Simcoe county who tried to address the needs of the children who require these services in that region and county of the province. I think what's important is that this particular proposal is not a bricks-and-mortar proposal; it's a proposal that includes about 10 locations, and it includes the funding.

On behalf of the children, the families and the people who put the proposal together, I want to thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services for coming to Simcoe North today and making that announcement. It was a win-win story for myself and for the minister and,

of course, the greatest winners were the families and the children who required those services.

I do think that every once in a while we do have to say something positive. On a separate note, though, with Simcoe county, I have to direct my comments for just a few moments to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He's in the House today. I'm very concerned about the greenbelt legislation. I do understand that we have some committee hearings set up; we're planning on committee hearings for this winter. We're very concerned about this in Simcoe county because of the leapfrogging effect.

Tomorrow afternoon I'll be attending the swearing in of the warden of Simcoe county. I believe it's getting to be 164 or 165 years that there has been a warden elected in Simcoe county. I know that the whole idea of the leapfrogging of development will be a huge issue for the local municipalities in the county of Simcoe, because now we're going to be faced with what we expect to be an increase in the number of applications for development. We're concerned about the infrastructure costs, and that deals with everything from the children's treatment centres to the fact that we need additional MRIs to the fact that there will be increased capacity required in the sewage treatment plants and the quality of the sewage treatment plants. The one thing we want to do is maintain the quality of life and improve upon the quality of water in our lakes and rivers in the county of Simcoe.

So I think it's important, although the minister tried to push the greenbelt legislation through using time allocation—in fact, one vote actually had to be reversed—that we are proceeding with committee hearings this winter. I really hope we'll be able at the public hearings to come up with some really positive notes from the areas that will be affected by the leapfrogging effect of the removal of the greenbelt area from the GTA.

I've only got another couple of minutes to speak, and then I'm going to turn it over to my colleague the member from Erie-Lincoln, who will wrap up our 20 minutes. As we leave this session of Parliament, it's important to note that the Dalton McGuinty government has proceeded through its first three sessions breaking a lot of promises to the citizens of Ontario. We hear that on a daily basis. In fact, it's amazing to watch the number of people who come forward at community events now. You know they probably voted Liberal, and now they're saying, "I wonder when the next election is, because we don't want to see this guy in power for the next three years."

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): You don't have to wonder. It's October 2007. We're making it really simple.

Mr Dunlop: I'm getting a lot of heckling from the opposite side and I'm losing my concentration. I think it's the member—she's not in her chair—from Stoney Creek. One of the amazing things around here is how, by the time the session's over, the whole Parliament's over, you finally know where everybody's from. So I pity you

in your chair, Mr Speaker, trying to carry on learning where all the seats are actually from.

That's our concern from this side of House: the number of broken promises made by this government. I want to hold my critic's position. I'm the critic for community safety and correctional services, and I've got some real issues with the Minister of Community Safety on a lot of things that he's brought forward that we've seen no debate on in this House. We've seen the 1,000-police-officers promise to the citizens of Ontario and to police forces. We're not actually seeing that come forward at all. We're seeing some kind of action plan in place, promises made to come forward with a resolution of the double-hatter issue. The minister promised mediation and then legislation. We haven't seen that yet. The list goes on and on and on. I'll be putting out a press release in the next few days showing the status of what the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has actually accomplished, which is not really a lot of anything in this first term.

So with that, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to concurrences, and I'll be sitting down now. I guess the member for Erie-Lincoln will be joining the debate in the next rotation.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I hope everybody in Leamington has a really Merry Christmas this year.

Tonight we're just wrapping up our comments on the Supply Act, 2004. As you know, it provides legislative authority for the spending from the estimates and supplementary estimates, which have been put before the House. Without this spending authority, the government would be unable to make most scheduled and unscheduled payments.

For instance, our nursing homes cannot be paid, our hospitals cannot be paid, doctors cannot be paid, municipalities cannot pay their employees, social assistance recipients cannot receive their funding, children's aid societies cannot be paid, our provincial police cannot be paid, and all of these other accounts that make up the government. So it's a pretty basic piece of legislation. It's been done, going back for hundreds of years, that government has to bring forth a supply motion, and we're here tonight to basically put that on the record.

1810

As you know, generally speaking, as the government pays its bills, pays its employees, Ontario is strong, thankfully. Ontario's had a very balanced economic program, which I think once in a while should be looked at as the envy of Canada. We have people moving here, they want to settle here, they want to bring their families here and they're more interested in coming to Ontario than ever before. That's one of the reasons, perhaps, as we think of the supply motion, we have to remind ourselves that maybe some of the problems we have in dealing with the greenbelt, or with all of our funding issues, deal with the fact that we are a magnet for the rest of the world, and we should be thankful for that and look

upon that as a gift we're getting—the great resources that we have in this wonderful province.

As we continue to grow this province, we have to look at the fact that we are adding spaces for our colleges and universities. We have frozen tuitions. We've got the new apprenticeship program in place, which means jobs for our young people, with 7,000 new apprenticeship spaces available. We've committed \$300 million in the next four years for equipment and other research infrastructure. We're now increasing the funding for public education by \$854 million. We've also hired an extra 1,300 teachers. So there are good things happening.

Certainly, in this House, it's the duty of the opposition to raise some of the challenges; that's their job. But I think as Ontarians, coming close to the end of the year and Christmas, we should reflect upon the fact that there is no other place in the world that we'd rather live than Ontario and Canada.

Let's ensure that everyone has a healthy, prosperous and merry Christmas and a wonderful 2005, especially those wonderful people down there in the tomato capital of the world, Leamington.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I find myself—is this another time allocation motion, more or less?

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: No? It's just a habit. It seems like, in the last couple of days, every time I get up in the House it's a time allocation motion, another Liberal bill rammed through this Legislature as we head into the Christmas season.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Get over it.

Mr Hudak: Well, it's hard to get over. Let me tell you one thing that the farmers in Niagara are having trouble getting over, and that's the way the Liberals tried to ram through Bill 135, the greenbelt legislation, which is going to affect, fundamentally and permanently, farmers throughout the greenbelt area. They tried to ram it through this Legislature. All public input had to be in by December 12.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: The minister who is heckling me at this point—it's good to see that he's here as I make this discussion. They wanted the information in by December 12 and wanted the bill to be rammed through the House by December 15, I think the minister said, so limiting to three days of consideration hundreds of submissions from across the province.

Mr Colle: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the orders have two other pieces of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll see to that. Mr Hudak?

Mr Hudak: In fact, I think the Ministry of Municipal Affairs is one of the items that was listed off in the motion, so I am sticking to the issue. You're asking for funds to be allocated to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, and a lot of that funding would have been used for Ministry of Municipal Affairs staff to ram that bill through the Legislature. They would have been here jamming that bill through the Legislature in three days, which left very little—actually, no time.

I know my House leader, Mr Baird, is going to be upset with me commenting on Bill 135, but I wanted to give the member credit too, because that was the first time that I can remember in my time in the House where we forced the government to withdraw a time allocation motion. Well, that wasn't done alone. A lot of credit goes to Mr Baird and my colleagues, but also because of substantial support for that from municipalities across the province and farm groups like the OFA and OFA affiliates, the regional groups throughout the greenbelt area, particularly the region of Niagara, as well as the town of Lincoln; and I think my friends from Clarington, Scugog and other municipalities—Brock township, Durham region, Wellington county, the township of Erin, among others. There was a broad base of not only the municipalities' farm groups but also conservation authorities that called for that, and I'm very pleased that now we will have some committee hearings in the new year. I know my colleague Mr Baird will be happy that I brought this up. It is something very important to my constituents, who now have more time to make sure that bill is properly addressed.

I do worry. I worry about this particular motion on the floor passing, because I don't know to what degree we can trust the government to spend that money wisely. I know the finance minister is here and I know, I think since our last full year's budget, that spending is up some 18% under a year and a half of the Liberal regime.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Get your numbers right.

Mr Hudak: I looked at the numbers closely. I think it's some 18% since the Liberals have come into office—a considerable increase in spending, part of that fuelled by probably the biggest tax hike in the history of the province, which hits working families—working families in Erie-Lincoln—up to potentially \$1,000 per family. That is a massive and punishing tax hike, particularly when Dalton McGuinty stared into those TV screens across the province and said he would not raise my taxes, the taxes of the voters.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Is there anything left that he can't tax?

Mr Hudak: I think if it lives, if it breathes, if it moves, if it thinks, he's going to tax it or regulate it, one or the other. I said earlier on, during members' statements, that nobody—we had a little fun with it—no-o-o-o-body—breaks promises like Dalton McGuinty.

Hon Mr Sorbara: That was so tacky.

Mr Hudak: But it got the Minister of Finance's attention. I think, when I listened to his remarks, he did mention once the 40 or so broken promises that have already happened. I've mentioned the tax hike, the minister's own responsibilities—auto insurance certainly has not come down the 10% to 20% that my Liberal opponent was promising during the last campaign. Those are just two key broken promises from the opposition. That gives me great pause to think that if we allow this to pass, can we actually trust the government to spend the money wisely?

The Minister of Transportation: I think there was a very interesting report brought forward by Christina Blizzard in the Toronto Sun about spending taxpayers' dollars in a public relations campaign, in Spain and in Spanish. In fact, the documents were sent around, according to the articles and the e-mails that we did receive, by Edelman, a public relations firm on contract with the Ministry of Transportation. While the minister's staff member, his communications assistant, denies that the ministry has anything to do with those documents, nor does Edelman, I don't believe it. I just think there are far too many links to Edelman, in fact, that an employee in Spain sent around the e-mails that had a document that was created by an Edelman employee in Toronto. I think that minister's office's fingerprints are all over this, which is regrettable. How can I be asked to vote for this when the Minister of Transportation is using taxpayer dollars to fight a public relations campaign in Spain? I think it's vindictive.

Mr Colle: Look at him defending the Spanish consortium. You've got a nerve to do that. What about the people of Ontario he ripped off? Jeez.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Hudak: The member is shedding some puppy dog tears across the way.

Mr Colle: How can you do that in this Legislature?

Mr Hudak: I ask him too—he pretends to be a beacon of integrity—how I can vote for this when you're spending taxpayer dollars in Spain to make a public relations battle with this group when they were doing their own IPO?

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: The member is right; there's a great vindictiveness about this government. If there is a group that stands up to them, you go out on the all-out attack, there's no doubt about it, and one of the attack dogs here is hoping he'll get into cabinet some day.

The Deputy Speaker: I just remind the members that the debate is carried through the Chair, not directly across the floor.

Member for Erie-Lincoln.

1820

Mr Hudak: But it's true, and it's certainly not in the spirit of the Christmas season to see that kind of vindictive attack, using taxpayer dollars by the Ministry of Transportation against somebody they deal with; and, as part of that, the attack on the Ontario Medical Association, using taxpayer—

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: You did. You used taxpayer dollars to commission a poll—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Hudak: —to basically try to characterize doctors as being money-grubbers. You did. It's there. It's in the record, right?

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: You did.

The member refuses to admit it, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Look, you two: Member from Eglinton-Lawrence, tone it down; member from Erie-Lincoln, please continue.

Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate it.

There's no doubt, using taxpayer dollars to attack doctors in Ontario whom you characterized as being money-hungry. You were sort of blaming the old doctors—that's how they characterized it.

I do find it regrettable that the government is using taxpayer dollars to make these types of attacks against groups that stand up to them. It's a highly regrettable habit of this government. The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association stood up to this government on the ill-conceived, poorly thought out so-called fat tax. Remember your first big tax grab, that fat tax, that we in the opposition stood up against, and the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association fought against? I think some of the things you have done with the tax hikes and the other campaigns are part of a vindictive attack against that group as well.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I know it's past 6 of the clock and we are getting hungry, and that may be the reason, but I'd like to hear these debates.

Now I'd like to hear from the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It is with such—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Bisson: They're really agitated here tonight. I can't believe it.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe the member from Eglinton-Lawrence didn't hear me.

Mr Bisson: I'll try it again.

It's with a warm heart that I stand here today on concurrence in supply. The Minister of Finance wants to vote on all of these supply motions so that he can pay the staff wages for all of these ministries and make sure all the programs get their money so that they can all go home with their Christmas cheques and all those little children out there, the little boys and girls, are able to get cheques from their parents so they can enjoy Christmas. I just want to say that I don't want to stand in the way of children and Christmas; I want to see this debate ended. Let's pay out the paycheques.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? There being none, Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm sorry. I'm sorry; I didn't look to the right; I should have. That vote will be stacked.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Environment. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

There is a vote.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1827 to 1837.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. All those in favour, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Levac, Dave	Racco, Mario G.
Brown, Michael A.	Marsales, Judy	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Matthews, Deborah	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Ruprecht, Tony
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Sergio, Mario
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Smith, Monique
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Duncan, Dwight	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Van Bommel, Maria
Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David	Wilkinson, John
Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve	
Jeffrey, Linda	Peterson, Tim	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Dunlop, Garfield	Hudak, Tim
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Yakubuski, John
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 43; the nays are 8.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Duncan has moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

SUPPLY ACT, 2004

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2004

Mr Sorbara moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 / Projet de loi 160, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2005.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

This House will now stand adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1841.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 14 December 2004

Mardi 14 décembre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 December 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 décembre 2004

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YORK CENTRAL HOSPITAL

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I rise today to remind the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance of their promise during the past election campaign to prioritize health care should they form a government. They were given that trust. They have now had the responsibility of governing for more than a year, and the promise to prioritize health care rings hollow to my constituents in the community of Richmond Hill and York region, who rely on the York Central Hospital as the centre of health care for the region.

As the MPP representing much of the catchment area for the hospital, I had the privilege of confirming the Ministry of Health's commitment to fund the hospital's capital expansion program more than a year ago. I have reminded the Minister of Health on a number of occasions of that commitment, that the need continues to be more acute and that the nurses, the doctors, the patients and the community at large are becoming increasingly distressed that this government continues to stall this project.

Today I call on the minister again, and this time implore him to respond to the call of the community, as evidenced by the petition I tabled in the Legislature yesterday, which demands that the York Central Hospital project be funded without further delay. It cites the fact that the hospital has met 100% of the Ministry of Health's planning requirements, and that the hospital's emergency department was originally built for 25,000 visits and now sees over 63,000 units. I call on this minister and on this government to fund this project.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Earlier this month our Legislative Assembly joined provincial Parliaments across the country in the annual illumination ceremony, Lights Across Canada. This ceremony is a wonderful tradition that marks the beginning of the holiday season here at Queen's Park.

This year, however, our ceremony was a little more impressive. If you've had a chance to look around at the

trees here at the Legislature or over in the government office complex, you may have noticed that this year our trees are decked in seasonal LED lights.

Light-emitting diodes, or LEDs, use a technology that's superior to standard incandescent strings. LEDs use a technology that is some 95% more energy-efficient and can last several years longer than traditional lights.

Chaired by Donna Cansfield, the MPP for Etobicoke Centre and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, our government's conservation action team, made up of parliamentary assistants from 12 ministries, has been working on the creation of a conservation culture in Ontario. This year, our government chose to practise what it preaches in taking the necessary steps to show leadership in energy conservation strategies. These lights will help to significantly reduce our seasonal consumption of energy here at Queen's Park. In leading by example, we'll continue to raise awareness about existing energy conservation programs and technologies. These LED lights are just one example of the many ways Ontarians can help to reduce their energy consumption.

As citizens of this province, we must all take responsibility to conserve energy and protect our environment. It is important for each of us to reflect on what we can do to reduce our energy consumption. By working together, we can make Ontario a leader in energy efficiency and conservation and, in so doing, make our province an even better place to live.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have an e-mail from a tobacco farmer, and I quote: "As a tobacco producer, I am now broke. After the crops are sold, I'll still be \$125,000 in debt."

Now the banks and the tobacco companies are following this government's lead in destroying farm families. You lose your farm, you lose your house—sometimes you lose your family. Young people are leaving the family farm; they're looking for jobs in town. Tobacco farm country is no longer the ideal place to live, to work and to raise a family.

Farmers in Elgin, Norfolk, Oxford, Brant and elsewhere are browbeaten. They're disillusioned; they're exhausted. These farmers have lost hope. They worked hard for a lifetime, and now their equity is gone, thanks to this government.

The question is, who's going to take care of them when their own ag minister won't? They can't collect un-

employment. I see there are at least half a dozen tobacco farmers in the gallery today.

This government is in bed with anti-tobacco extremists. This government has declared war on tobacco through smoke-free Ontario, but this very same government is addicted to its share of the \$8 billion in taxes from tobacco across the dominion of Canada. Where is the compensation for tobacco farmers in crisis?

Don't fudge it with talk of community transition dollars. These farmers don't need hand-holding; they need fair compensation. This government has been dragging its feet. Now they need much more than that unfulfilled promise of \$50 million. Time has run out.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm rising today to comment again about the Liberals' domestic violence strategy announced yesterday.

The Premier and the minister responsible for women's issues both repeatedly said how this plan was to break the cycle of violence. While the plan does introduce more initiatives for better prevention and public awareness, and training, it falls far short of helping to break the cycle of violence for women already experiencing abuse.

The lack of housing options is among the two top reasons that make women remain with or return to their abusers. There is a scarcity of safe places to go. Women's emergency shelters are filled to capacity and were not given any sustained funding yesterday. The money for fundraising training is of little relief for an urgent need for more shelter beds and programs.

We just got a call in my office today about a pregnant woman about to give birth who is trying to leave an abusive situation. She has been turned away from numerous shelters in the GTA due to lack of space. Yesterday's announcement does nothing for her.

It's not only shelters that are suffering due to lack of funding. On page 27 of the 2003 Liberal campaign book, the McGuinty Liberals said there needs to be more second-stage housing and that they would reinstate funding for second-stage housing programs. But the Liberals did not deliver. They broke that promise, and now second-stage housing organizations across the province are at risk of closing very soon.

The Liberal government is also failing to build more affordable housing, despite having received \$300 million from the federal Liberals for construction. Women need this housing in order to break the cycle of violence.

1340

CHAMPIONNAT DE VOLLEYBALL VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): C'est avec plaisir que je viens applaudir l'équipe de volleyball, garçons seniors, de l'école secondaire l'Escale de Rockland. Pour la deuxième année consécutive, ils ont

remporté la médaille d'or au championnat provincial de volleyball de la catégorie A.

This annual championship is organized by OFSSA and took place this year on Manitoulin Island in the beautiful riding of my colleague Mike Brown, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin.

Je prends cette occasion pour applaudir le travail des entraîneurs, François St Denis et Jason Bédard, ainsi que les jeunes athlètes qui ont participé au championnat: Jason Boivin, Guy Charbonneau, Vincent Cossette, Jean-Christian Daigle, Éric Drouin, David Gaudreau, Yannik Gadouas, Alexandre Joly, mon petit-neveu Jasmin Laflèche, Stéphane Lemaire, Yanick Mulder, Matthew Nolan, Jonathan Samson et Corey Wilcox.

Bravo à l'équipe, et félicitations à la direction de l'école secondaire l'Escale de Rockland.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I rise to call the attention of the House today to yet another broken Liberal promise, and that was to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement for low-income families in Ontario. Just as he signed the taxpayer protection pledge and then turned his back on taxpayers and broke his word, Dalton McGuinty signed another election promise document, this one called the emergency measures for women and children. He signed it in September 2000, promising that when he became Premier he would end the clawback of the supplement. In typical Liberal fashion, the government wants the \$200 million to use on other programs rather than trust parents on social assistance to spend it on their own children. The McGuinty Liberals are still clawing back over \$1,000 per child in the national child benefit supplement payments from parents on welfare, despite their election promise.

On May 19 of this year, Minister Bountrogianni said she was content to break this promise since she was reviewing programs currently provided by these funds. As recently as yesterday, the Minister of Social Services said the clawback won't be eliminated until the government can find \$200 million for programs for children from low-income families. Who would have imagined that the miserly McGuinty government is the Scrooge that stole Christmas from children on social assistance in our province?

VINNIE DiROLLO

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise today to share a story of holiday spirit, generosity and random acts of kindness in my riding of Oakville.

Vinnie DiRollo is well known in the Bronte area as a warm-hearted and high-spirited proprietor of Vinnie's Café. Last year, Vinnie tragically lost her son Christian to brain illness; he was age nine. In memory of her son, Vinnie and a team of local business people have organized the Christian's Dream Foundation, which so far has

raised over \$120,000 for worthy causes, such as Rose Cherry's Home for Kids.

This holiday season, beyond its traditional fundraising efforts, the café is also focusing on promoting care and goodwill throughout the Oakville community. Every 20th cup of coffee served in Vinnie's Café is on the house, with one catch: The recipients of the free purchase are directed to perform an act of kindness for somebody else. The hope is to start a chain reaction of spontaneous goodwill in the Oakville community.

This has caught on definitely in the Bronte community, as businesses such as True Life Chiropractic have adopted similar policies. I'm proud to report that this initiative has snowballed in Oakville. Wouldn't it be great if we here in the assembly could help extend its reach into each of our own constituencies? I think the efforts of Vinnie DiRollo and all members of the Oakville community involved are to be highly commended at this, the holiday season.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): When our Liberal government came to power last year, the city of Ottawa was faced with some of the longest MRI wait times in the province. The Tories left behind a pretty big health care mess in Ottawa; in fact, Ottawa is so underserved that our MRI capacity per capita was half that of other cities in the province.

However, I am pleased to say that our Premier, our health minister and our government are working hard to address the inequities of the previous administration. Did you hear that, John? Their work is already producing tangible results for residents of the Ottawa area. Last Friday, Premier McGuinty was on hand to officially open a new MRI at the Orléans satellite clinic of l'hôpital Montfort. Another Liberal promise kept.

The Montfort MRI will serve residents from across eastern Ontario and will offer MRI patients the kind of quality bilingual care that has become the signature of l'hôpital Montfort. Staff at the Montfort clinic is already providing diagnostic services to 16 patients per day, and the case volume is steadily increasing toward capacity.

This is the second new MRI our government has opened in Ottawa this year, in the hopes of improving access to services and reducing wait times. I thank the Premier and the Minister of Health for recognizing how underserved the Ottawa area was.

With our plan to open up seven more new MRI sites across this province and to bring private MRIs back into the public system, I am convinced we are on the right track to building a healthier Ontario.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I rise today to bring to the House's attention the fact that yesterday the Conservative and NDP caucuses voted against fiscal transparency. They voted against the Fiscal Transparency

and Accountability Act, legislation which forces the government to hand over the financial books to the Auditor General for review prior to an election. The legislation ensures that there will never, ever be a repeat of the Harris-Eves government's \$5.5-billion deficit deception.

The Conservatives voted against the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act in open defiance of their leader, who admitted on a Toronto radio show that his party was not honest with the voters about Ontario's books being cooked to the tune of \$5.5 billion. Even John Tory admitted the books were cooked. He said he would support such a bill that we passed yesterday. To quote the Conservative leader, he said, "I'll support it if he brings it in. I think that's a very good idea." I just wonder, has Tory flip-flopped on having the books made open for the people of Ontario, or is the caucus of the Conservatives in open revolt?

As for our NDP friends, it's no surprise that they have their heads in the sand. They took Ontario to the brink of bankruptcy, running up four straight deficits. We know the story of their legacy.

I guess the message here is, what are our opposition parties, the NDP and the Tories, saying? Are they saying they don't want the people of Ontario to have a view of the books, that they don't want the Provincial Auditor to look at our books? Do they want a repeat of the \$5.5-billion deficit debacle that they underwent under Eves and Harris?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF OTTAWA

AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA VILLE D'OTTAWA

Mr Gerretsen moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 163, An Act to amend the City of Ottawa Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la ville d'Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister Gerretsen?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'll wait until ministerial statements, Speaker.

MOTIONS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move several motions respecting committees.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have consent? Agreed.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the following amendments be made to the membership of certain committees:

On the standing committee on general government, Ms Jeffrey replaces Mr Qaadri; on the standing committee on justice policy, Mr Qaadri replaces Mr Oraziatti; on the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr McMeekin replaces Ms Jeffrey, and Mr Peterson replaces Mr Craiton; on the standing committee on regulations and private bills, Mr Kular replaces Mr Leal, and Mr Craiton replaces Mr Peterson; on the standing committee on social policy Mr Racco replaces Mr McMeekin.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has moved amendments to the membership of certain committees. On the standing committee on general government Ms Jeffrey replaces—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispensed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that notwithstanding the order of the House dated June 17, 2004, all committees may meet on Wednesday, December 15, 2004, and Thursday, December 16, 2004, for the purpose of organization.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has moved that all committees may meet—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispensed.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the following standing committees be authorized to meet during the winter adjournment for the purpose of considering government business in accordance with the schedule of meeting dates agreed to by the three party whips and tabled with the Clerk of the Assembly: the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, the standing committee on general government, the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has moved the following—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispensed. That's much easier for me.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

REFERRAL OF BILL 110

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the order for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to require the disclosure of information to police respecting persons being treated for gunshot wounds, be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to the order of precedence for private members' bills.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Bisson: Santa Claus has come early, and the government has just given us an opportunity to do this.

I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: that Mr Hampton assume ballot item number 47.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm going to request a minute so that the clerks' table can get the written and the spoken in sync.

Mr Bisson: Well, Mr Speaker, the original one came from the table. I'll try it again. Let's hope we've got it right this time: Notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mr Bisson and Mr Hampton exchange places in order of precedence for private members' public business and that notice be waived for ballot item number 47.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The government House leader may put a light on this matter.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We're prepared to go back to this motion once the NDP gets its act together.

Mr Bisson: for the third time—third strike, I'm out: Notwithstanding standing order 96(d), I say again, Mr Kormos and Mr Hampton exchange places in order of precedence for private members' public business and notice be waived for ballot item 47, as I said the first time.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

The Speaker: Let me just move the motion before you debate it. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? One second. I think Mr Baird is right. He wants to debate the motion and he has the floor.

Mr Baird: I'd like to indicate on behalf of the official opposition that we're always happy to help our friends in the New Democratic Party and we will support this resolution in the holiday spirit that exists in this place. I'd like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I seek unanimous consent to allow Mr Bisson to put the same motion again.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent for Mr Bisson to put the motion again?

Interjection: Get up there.

Mr Bisson: I can barely stand. We'll try it again, for the fourth time. I had it right the first time and the third time. I'll try it for the fourth time now: Notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mr Kormos and Mr Hampton exchange places in order of precedence for private members' public business and that the notice be waived for ballot item 47—for the fourth time.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Just for the benefit of the people in the galleries today, I'd like to point out that, on occasion, this House does conduct itself much more efficiently than it has today.

The Speaker: The House has conducted itself efficiently. Thank you. That is not a point of order.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WATER QUALITY

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Earlier today, I had the opportunity to meet the students of Whitney Junior Public School here in the city of Toronto. They are a very environmentally active school that has been certified as an eco-school, and I had the chance to discuss the importance of water protection with them. I told the students this morning that Ontario deserves the best-protected water in North America. I am proud to inform the members of the House that today we are two steps closer to that goal.

Our government is protecting the quality and the quantity of our drinking water for future generations. We are introducing tough new rules for issuing permits to take water from our lakes, rivers and aquifers. We are also releasing two major reports on surface and groundwater protection. Stronger water-taking rules will protect communities today, and clear, science-based source water protection will benefit our environment and our health for generations. Clean, safe water is essential. We cannot live without it. If our supply of water is threatened, our quality of life is at risk. We must have and we will have the highest standards, the toughest rules and the best science.

Today I am happy to announce tough new rules on removing water from Ontario's surface and groundwater sources. The old rules were 20 years old. An overhaul

was long overdue. The existing system has been criticized by the Environmental Commissioner, the Auditor General and Justice O'Connor. We listened to their criticisms and we are acting.

Under the old rules, we did not know how much water was being taken or how much water was available. It was like repeatedly taking money out of your bank account without knowing the balance. The system we are putting in place will give us the information needed to make informed decisions. The new regulation clarifies and strengthens the rules for granting permits to take water.

When a director at the Ministry of the Environment is considering whether to issue a permit, he or she will look at a number of things. They will consider how much water flow there is and what the water level is. They will look at how the groundwater and surface water in the area interact. They will look at how much water is available and the quality of that water.

When a person or a company applies for a permit, they will have to show that water conservation measures are in place or will be put in place. Permits to take water will only be issued if it is clear that the water is needed and will actually be used in the near future. A director will be able to require mitigation efforts if residents or a community is affected by a water-taking permit.

Finally, the new rules will take into account the existing level of water use in the watershed. Permits will no longer be issued for new or expanded takings from watersheds where there is already high usage. These new rules mean there will be enough water for current use and future growth.

Today our government also released two important reports developed by some of Ontario's foremost experts on water protection. Our two expert committees have been working hard for a year on ideas and recommendations for watershed-based source protection. These reports will help us end our patchwork approach to water protection and help us introduce a new law to protect entire watersheds under a single plan.

These comprehensive recommendations will form the basis of legislation to establish an innovative province-wide water resource protection system. Never before has this much technical expertise been devoted to identifying and preventing threats before they reach our drinking water. The reports recommend security zones around wellheads and water intakes to ensure contaminants cannot get into a water supply. The reports also identify a list of significant threats, such as chemical storage, landfills and abandoned wells, that will help local authorities assess and properly manage their risks.

We are moving from a reactive approach to water protection to a preventive approach. We owe that to the seven people who died and the thousands who became ill in Walkerton in the year 2000. We cannot afford to let our protection efforts lag. We will not be satisfied until our water protection is the best in North America and the envy of the world. Today we are taking actions to help ensure that Ontario's water supply needs are met today and for generations to come.

CITY OF OTTAWA
LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES LINGUISTIQUES D'OTTAWA

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'm very pleased today to have the privilege to introduce an amendment to the City of Ottawa Act, 1999.

Je suis très heureux aujourd'hui d'avoir le privilège de présenter une modification à la Loi de 1999 sur la ville d'Ottawa.

For years, democratically elected representatives of the city of Ottawa have been waiting for these changes to take place. The previous government rejected Ottawa's requests. The previous government ignored the wishes of the mayor and the council of the city of Ottawa.

This government is listening. We have listened to the people of the city of Ottawa, and we are introducing legislation that requires the city to adopt a policy respecting the use of the English and French languages in all or specified parts of the administration of the city and in the city's provision of all or specific municipal services.

Nous avons écouté les gens d'Ottawa et nous présentons une mesure législative en vertu de laquelle la ville sera tenue d'adopter une politique concernant l'utilisation de l'anglais et du français dans l'ensemble ou une partie précisée des activités administratives de la ville ainsi que dans les prestations des services municipaux ou une partie précisée de ces services.

This proposed legislative amendment is in keeping with the city's request. With the proposed legislation that I'm introducing, this government is demonstrating our belief in municipal autonomy over local issues.

The French Language Services Act, among other things, authorizes municipalities in designated areas of the province to pass bylaws to provide all or specified municipal services in English and French. In addition, the Municipal Act, 2001, permits municipalities to make bylaws, official plans and records of proceedings in French as well as in English and to conduct their proceedings in either French or English.

My ministry and the Office of Francophone Affairs have been working together to develop this proposed amendment. We believe our proposed legislation will recognize the bilingual character of our nation's capital.

Mon ministère et l'Office des affaires francophones ont travaillé ensemble à l'élaboration de la modification proposée. Nous estimons que cette mesure législative reconnaîtra le caractère bilingue de notre capitale nationale.

Our proposed legislation does not change the city of Ottawa's freedom to develop its own policy regarding the issue. It is this government's view—and it has always been this government's view—that it's the city of Ottawa's responsibility to develop a policy, including any consultation with affected groups as it feels necessary.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that this government is pleased to respond to the city of Ottawa's request, and

we applaud Ottawa council's desire to maintain the English and French character that makes their city a very fitting and proper home for our nation's capital.

Je vous remercie, monsieur le Président.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): The Minister of the Environment just released two reports but no bill. Minister, where is the legislation you promised in a speech to the Grand River Conservation Authority? You made a promise that we would see source water protection by the end of this year. Is this another broken promise?

I would like to remind the minister that it was our government that first acted on protecting Ontario's water resources. In 2003 we drafted amendments to the water taking and transfer regulation. Once again, our actions started this province down the road toward stronger protection. Our party recognizes the need to protect our resources. The difference is that we act on it and you and your Liberal colleagues continue to make decisions that are really not thought through. You make promises you don't keep.

Your press release states that "where there is already a high level of water use in a watershed," you will refuse new or expanded permits. Your proposed regulation focuses on high-use watersheds instead of focusing on a science-based approach. You've taken the political approach. You could actually be punishing those in high-use watersheds even if the water taking is sustainable, yet you could be allowing withdrawal on a low-use watershed that could not sustain it. Maybe you're giving your staff the ability to refuse a PTTW even though it's in the best location from a science-based sustainability perspective.

1410

Again, has staff opened the door for you to get involved to interfere, perhaps based on politics rather than on science? I will remind the minister that water bottlers, this target of yours, take about 0.2% of all the water taken in Ontario. Two thirds of the water is taken for dams, reservoirs, cooling water and hydroelectricity. I say again, where is the real commitment to source water protection? Where is the legislation?

In September, you gave a speech at the Grand River Conservation Authority. I was there that day. You promised you would have source water protection legislation by the end of this year. You've got maybe two or three days left in the Legislature. Perhaps this is a promise unfulfilled.

CITY OF OTTAWA
LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES LINGUISTIQUES D'OTTAWA

M. John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): L'opposition officielle, le Parti progressiste-conservateur, et notre chef

avons toujours appuyé les bons services, les services de qualité, disponibles en français dans les régions désignées. On a appuyé très fortement le projet de loi 8, qui a été adopté unanimement il y a 15 ans par cette Assemblée législative.

Quand les conservateurs étaient le gouvernement dans cette province, on a créé 12 conseils scolaires francophones, élus par les francophones, et pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la province, l'équité dans le financement de l'éducation. Pour la première fois dans l'histoire de la province, un jeune francophone du sud-ouest de l'Ontario, de Windsor, ou d'Ottawa ou du nord-est, de Penetanguishene, a reçu l'équité, le même montant d'argent pour son éducation. Ce sont des exemples réels qui peuvent aider les familles francophones à combattre l'assimilation dans la province de l'Ontario.

I did have a great opportunity to read this bill. This is how long it is: one page. The word "bilingual" isn't even in the bill.

This bill is like a Christmas dinner without any turkey. This bill is like a birthday party without a birthday cake. This bill is like an Easter Sunday morning with no Easter egg hunt. This bill is a hamburger with no beef. This bill is like hell without the devil. This bill is like Parliament without Kormos.

People may have disagreed with the position of the previous government, la position de ne pas avoir un statut bilingue. Après l'adoption de ce projet de loi, on n'aura toujours pas un statut bilingue dans la province de l'Ontario.

This is a weak bill that will do absolutely nothing for francophone families in Nepean-Carleton and throughout Ottawa. I'm surprised they would even waste their time bringing it forward.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Tout ce que je peux dire, c'est que ça fait longtemps qu'on attend que le gouvernement fasse quelque chose pour la ville d'Ottawa. On sait ce qui est arrivé. Il y a eu un fusionnement. La ville d'Ottawa n'existe plus comme elle était avant que le gouvernement conservateur l'ait fusionnée. Quand le fusionnement est arrivé, on a perdu le statut officiel de la ville d'Ottawa, qui avait besoin d'être conféré par la province de l'Ontario.

Comme vous le savez, monsieur le Président, j'ai introduit un projet de loi ici à l'Assemblée au nom des néo-démocrates le printemps passé demandant directement de faire ceci. Là, on voit qu'il y a un projet de loi en place. Je veux dire qu'on est content qu'il y a quelque chose ici. On veut dire qu'on est « supportif », mais ce n'est pas trop clair, ce qui est dans la motion. Je veux dire au gouvernement que, certainement, je veux voir la décision, avec la ville d'Ottawa et autres, pour savoir si c'est réellement ce qu'ils veulent avoir, parce que ce qui est important, c'est de ne pas jouer des jeux avec cette question. La ville d'Ottawa est une réalité. Il y a des francophones en nombre. C'est une communauté qui est reconnue comme étant une ville où il y a beaucoup de francophones, qui avait déjà le statut, et on a besoin de

s'assurer que la ville d'Ottawa a conféré sur elle ce qu'il y avait dans le passé.

Quand je lis ce projet de loi, je ne dis pas que ça doit prendre 15 pages; tout ce qu'on dit, c'est qu'on donne l'opportunité à la ville d'Ottawa de créer une politique pour se déclarer officiellement bilingue elle-même. À la fin de la journée, j'imagine que c'est une manière inverse de donner à Ottawa le statut bilingue. Mais d'habitude ce qui arrive, pour être clair, c'est que la municipalité fait la demande elle-même et c'est la province qui dit, « Oui, on vous donne le statut. » Dans ce cas-ci, c'est un peu l'inverse : c'est la province qui dit, « On vous donne un projet de loi qui vous dit que, si vous avez une politique officiellement bilingue, vous êtes capable de vous déclarer vous-même. »

Je dis que politiquement, c'est intéressant, mais j'aurais aimé que le gouvernement libéral fût très clair avec la question : que l'on connaît la réalité de l'Ontario pour les francophones, qu'on reconnaît que c'est une municipalité qui est bilingue et que l'on confère ses droits sur cette municipalité.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): In response to the Minister of the Environment, the McQuinty Liberals have already made a farce of protecting water from mass water takings when they gave approval to the big pipe in King City. In a speech that the minister delivered this past July, she said the moratorium on water taking "is designed to prevent uses that would transport millions of litres of water out of local watersheds without giving consideration to the long-term environmental consequences. It is intended to stop the reckless giveaway of Ontario's water." But days later, they broke the spirit of their own moratorium on water taking and the promise to protect water at its source by granting approval for the big pipe.

The McQuinty Liberals are now on record as issuing a permit for one of the largest water takings ever. One phase alone is taking 66 billion litres of groundwater from the interconnected Oak Ridges moraine's aquifer system. So I am fully expecting, after the minister's announcement today, that she will revisit the big pipe decision, which, by the way, also undermines the green-belt's stated purpose to protect hydrological systems in Ontario.

I want to make a point about source water plans, as the minister said, having primacy over other laws, including official plans. I'm curious to see if this is implemented, considering what the Liberals did in committee to my amendment which would have made that happen. When general government met for amendments to the Planning Act, I proposed an amendment that would require official plans and planning applications to comply with source water protection. But guess what? The majority of the Liberals on the committee turned that down.

Given their refusal to do it then, it is not encouraging to hear this announcement today that they are going to do

it now. But they will have several opportunities to see to it in the pending source water protection legislation and Greenbelt Act. I hope that after the minister's announcement today, she will revisit that amendment and see fit to include it; otherwise, the stated purpose today will not come about.

I wanted to make another point about aggregates being exempt. I'm troubled to see that they are exempted from these new rules. The proposed greenbelt plan and the proposed provincial policy statement actually strengthen the aggregate industry's clutch on greenbelt lands, and now we see that they have an exemption from water taking today on the grounds that they don't take that much water, a significant amount, out of the ground. Number one, they do. Number two, many of these aggregates are on greenbelt land. They're being exempted from that, and now they're being exempted from these water-taking rules. Given the serious impacts on water of aggregate extraction and the government's own stated intention to protect water sources and watersheds, exempting aggregates from these new rules is an about-face. Any water taking from the greenbelt, one of the supposed centrepieces of the source water protection strategy, cannot be considered incidental.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: They want me to stop now over there, Mr Speaker. I'm sure they would love to hear more. See, the minister wants me to go on.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

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JOHN BROWN

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on the passing of former MPP John L. Brown.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): It is a time of reflection whenever a person who has served in this assembly, for a long period of time or short, happens to pass away. John Brown did serve in the assembly from 1967 to 1971 as the member for Beaches-Woodbine for the New Democratic Party. He was a man who distinguished himself, for the most part, for his interest in the field of health and particularly mental health and children's mental health. He was born in South Dakota, and he was one of 11 children.

When you're looking at some of the information that is provided, you will know that some people have their minds made up or their thoughts formulated by their youthful days. Mr Brown—it was certainly the fact that he grew up in some difficult circumstances in South Dakota. As I mentioned, there were 11 children in the family. "His associates say Brown's character was strongly shaped by watching his father's repeated failures at farming, his subsequent loss of land and the fierce

struggle that forced the family band into a driving unit for survival. Brown was a natural leader among them."

As a member of the Legislature, he was not one who particularly enjoyed this House. He was a person who, rather, fought many of his battles outside of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. No doubt he was a person within his own caucus who spoke out on many issues and didn't always have the unanimous support of the caucus, but he fought on for that in which he believed. Stephen Lewis, formerly of the New Democratic Party, recognized a talent early on when he was dealing with some very difficult children. John Brown was prepared to take on the job of dealing with children who had some immense problems in terms of mental health and to work with those children.

In the Legislature, he was certainly very critical in the role of the opposition in the field of health care of the government of the day, from 1967 to 1971. He had a good deal of passion about mental health. I think all of us recognize that it's one of the areas in life, and indeed the life of a Legislature, where we have seen less emphasis than we would like to see. Mental health, in the total spectrum of health, has never enjoyed—in any circumstances I can remember—the kind of emphasis that it should. This would have been very frustrating to John Brown because of his great concern about those youngsters.

He was the executive director of Browndale International Ltd and Brown Camps, and it was an organization that dealt exclusively with troubled youth. They did not take on easy cases. Others may not have been prepared to do so; John Brown and his group were prepared to take on the most difficult. He had a revolutionary approach to children's mental health. It involved intense, 24-hour-care, compassionate treatment of children, and allowing children to express themselves. He was very hands-on in terms of the treatment provided. He took great strides both before and after his election to communicate the need for the Ministry of Health to invest in children's mental health facilities, and that cry is with us today, as it has been for a long time. Everyone is trying to respond to that. Stephen Lewis referred to him as "a dedicated rescuer of profoundly troubled children."

He was a member of the standing committee on health, the standing committee on welfare and reform, and the standing committee on social, family and correctional services. You recognize by the committees that he chose to be on—because that's usually what members do; they make that request—that he was very dedicated in that particular field.

To members of his family and his associates, we extend our deep sympathy on his passing recently.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the official opposition to extend our sincerest sympathies to the family of John Brown, someone who served in this House for four years in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He was someone whom Ellie Teshar of the Toronto Star called "an out-

standing social worker." Brown, according to professional colleagues, including some critics, is the man who did most to advance the cause of disturbed children in this province.

On behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, Bob Runciman, our leader, John Tory, and indeed the entire Conservative caucus, I would like to extend our sincerest sympathies to Mr Brown's family.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a privilege and an honour to speak about John Brown, who was, of course, the predecessor for many years of the old riding of Beaches-Woodbine, serving in this Legislature from 1967 to 1971.

When you start to look at the old newspaper clippings and some of the stories around the Legislature, when you talk to people who were here at that time, the words to describe John Brown are quite common: He was a brilliant man, he was uncompromising, he was passionate and he was very committed, especially to children and to those who he felt had been abused by the system.

He grew up poor. As has been said in the Legislature already, he was one of 11 children. His father was a failed farmer. His father lost his land, and John Brown and his family had to struggle from his early years in a life of poverty.

But he went on to become educated in a way that I think very few people can understand—a person born into such rural poverty. If you look at his biography, which you can find in the legislative library, he had a bachelor of social work, a master's degree, ACSW, AGPA. He was educated at the University of Minnesota, the University of British Columbia school of social work, the University of Chicago school of social services. He was recognized in the United States, Canada and Britain for his academic background.

He really came on to the stage, though, in Ontario, in 1953, when he was hired to work at Warrendale. We all know of that groundbreaking institution. In fact, there are some good quotes, again from Ellie Tesher, who I think everybody in the Legislature, or at least the three of us who spoke, had an opportunity to refer to. She wrote:

"Doug Barr, director of Metro Children's Aid Society, summed up the controversy of Brown's treatment program:

"Some of the best care for children and some of the worst care has been provided by Browndale. They've taken in some of the toughest kids and hung in the longest with them, with quite significant results."

The children he sought to serve were probably the most disturbed youth of the day, and he had amazing success. Quoting again from this same article:

"Brown arrived with his first wife Liz fresh from a social work degree at the University of British Columbia and early training in Windsor helping disturbed children using innovative methods of leading therapists.

"A former colleague says Brown arrived at a time when Ontario's ministry of social welfare was paying 'five cents a day per child.'" I think that's a little bit of

hyperbole, but obviously not enough money was being spent in those days.

He went on to establish Browndale and Warrendale, and the article says:

"At Warrendale, Brown launched the beginning of group home therapy programs in Ontario—family-like treatment units, with five children and three child care workers living in houses on residential streets. Senior staff, like Brown himself, were 'extended family' to the youngsters."

Today we take for granted that children are allowed to remain in the community and not put in institutions, and we accept as a matter of right that those children will be looked after in community settings. He was the first, he was the pioneer and he was very controversial.

In 1967, Mr Brown chose to run for this Legislature and represented the people of Beaches-Woodbine, as the riding was then known. He was a controversial figure here. He often spoke in disparaging tones to the government of the day. He was very angry and he was very unhappy, I would have to say, from what we understand of life in the Legislature. He chose not to run again in 1971 and went back to his first love; that is, looking after children.

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Of course—and no one has said this—he found himself in troubles in his later life. I suppose that can happen to each and every one of us. But he remains a figure that many Canadians respect and admire. Many people of Ontario remember how well he helped troubled youth, and we remember him for that.

We asked for a word from one of his colleagues at the time, Rev William Ferrier, and he quoted it best: "His friends remember him as a friendly, warm-hearted, compassionate human being they could count on for support during tough times. He's the kind of guy you could lean on."

New Democrats remember his life. We sympathize and send sympathy to his family and friends, and remember a true pioneer in Ontario.

J. EARL McEWEN

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on the passing of former MPP J. Earl McEwen.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent for each party to speak? Agreed.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I didn't know his first name was Joseph, but it was Joseph Earl McEwen. We always knew him as J. Earl McEwen, who represented the riding from both the Liberal perspective and the Conservative perspective at different times and also as an independent. He's one member who has sat in this Legislature representing two political parties and his riding as an independent.

He was certainly a colourful character. The member for Kingston and the Islands, the Honourable John

Gerretsen, would say that he was probably best known as the reeve of Kingston township, and that Kingston township became somewhat urbanized and had its greatest period of growth under J. Earl McEwen as reeve. He held many positions at the local level.

He was the eldest of six siblings, born in Sharbot Lake, Ontario. He was elected to the riding of Frontenac-Addington first in 1975, re-elected in 1977 and 1981 and ended his career in 1985. He was an owner-operator of a small chain of supermarkets and dairy stores, so he was a person who knew local business extremely well; a former reeve of Kingston township—and this is a long period of time—for some 16 years, as well as a past warden of Frontenac county.

I remember J. Earl very well. He was a “regular guy,” they would say within his riding. Business and politics consumed most of his life. He was a person who understood his riding well, because he enjoyed hunting and fishing and farming. In particular, we all remember his pride in the horse-breeding field. He used to show horses on many occasions and was very expert in the field. If you wanted to know anything about horses, you asked J. Earl McEwen.

His former campaign chair said that he left his mark in many ways, not only in Kingston township but also in the Kingston area and the province. “Politics has times of great highs and lows, and J. Earl’s seen them all. Fortunately, there have been more highs” for J. Earl McEwen.

There were some interesting things about him. J. Earl did not particularly like this House as a place. He enjoyed being a member of provincial Parliament, but he didn’t believe that an awful lot would be accomplished within the legislative precinct itself and therefore spent a lot of time in his own constituency working with people there. He preferred helping people in the riding to sitting at Queen’s Park.

He often said, “I only spent half the time I should have in Toronto, because there was no sense. You go up there and don’t accomplish anything. Out in the riding you get things done.” He maintained offices at the north and south ends of the riding as well as ... Toronto.”

We will also remember him for his vehicle. I know the members from eastern Ontario remember J. Earl and his Lincoln. It’s referred to as his “Lincoln” here. I was always under the impression it was a Cadillac, but it says “Lincoln” in the article.

It says, “During his heyday, Mr McEwen was a politician, landlord, grocery chain store owner and hobby farmer with champion quarter horses. He toured the riding in a two-door Lincoln, often wearing a wide-brimmed hat and chewing on a cigar. ‘People never took any offence to me driving the Lincoln because I was a regular guy with them,’ Mr McEwen said.”

To a number of his colleagues, as well, when they asked him, “J. Earl, your riding is one which has many challenges financially that the people in the riding have to meet. How are you greeted when you show up in this huge vehicle, and why do you drive this lovely new vehicle into the riding?” he said, in a joking way,

“They’ve got to know that somebody important is coming to town.” That was the humour that J. Earl had.

He was a very grassroots politician who worked the riding exceedingly well, who had a sense of humour that was very much appreciated in his own riding. He was a person who will be remembered in the Legislative Assembly because of his independent thoughts on many issues. He was not a person easy to rein in. We always talk in this Legislature in a jocular way about the trained seals, as they’re supposedly called, whether they’re on one side of the House or the other. Well, you could never describe J. Earl McEwen as a trained seal, because he could be just as ornery with a Conservative or a Liberal Premier as he could with anybody else if they disagreed with his riding.

We extend to J. Earl McEwen’s family and close friends our condolences upon his passing at a ripe old age, having accomplished a lot for the part of the province that he represented so ably.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I appreciate the opportunity, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, to say a few words about the life of Earl McEwen.

It used to be the tradition that the party the deceased MPP represented would get to speak first about his or her passing. But in Earl’s case we’d have to flip a coin.

There are only, I believe, four or five members remaining in the House who served with Earl, and I’m one of them. Before arriving here in 1981, I’d certainly heard of Earl McEwen, and I’m sure the member for Kingston and the Islands will agree that Earl was a larger-than-life character in our part of the province.

Earl was, I think it’s fair to say, a down-to-earth, plain-speaking kind of guy who was probably underestimated for much of his political life. He was undoubtedly the only member representing a largely rural riding who could get away with driving around in a huge Lincoln or Cadillac. He had a different story, Jim, in the riding. He said it was because people knew he was a regular guy.

Earl’s involvement in provincial politics was, to say the least, colourful. He was something of a political chameleon. He started out by running for a Conservative nomination and, when he was unsuccessful, ran as an independent. My recollection is that he lost that election. He made it into the Legislature as a Liberal and served eight years in that caucus. Then, in a master stroke of bad political timing, he crossed the floor to join the Tories shortly before Bill Davis announced his retirement. Earl carried the Conservative colours into the 1995 election, and that ended his days as an MPP.

Despite his political life coming to a close on a down note, Earl McEwen had a great deal to be proud of. He was a very successful businessman and, as a municipal politician, he led Kingston township through its highest growth years. Earl McEwen was a good man who made a significant contribution to his community and his province.

On behalf of our caucus, I want to extend our deepest sympathy to his family members.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I rise today on behalf of New Democrats to talk about Mr McEwen and the long time he spent, not only in this Legislature but also as a local politician back home. Mr McEwen probably understood more than most the old saying that Tip O'Neill said just south of the border: "Politics is local."

Mr McEwen first got into politics—why?—because he owned a store on a street somewhere around Kingston in the county of Frontenac-Addington, didn't like what the local township was doing when it came to how they maintained that particular street, went to see his local politician, the alderman there, didn't like the answer and said, "Well, I'll run." Run he did, and elected he was.

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He served, first of all, for the township of Kingston, where he was very involved in municipal planning and in making sure he worked hard on behalf of the local constituents to put that area of the province, Kingston and the surrounding area, on the map.

He quickly rose to the position of deputy reeve and eventually became the reeve of the township of Kingston. He was very involved in many of the things that many people in Kingston now take for granted. We often forget that all these things we use every day in our communities come from somewhere.

Mr McEwen was very involved in developing the parks in that city. He was very well known for being a friend of the people who were trying to preserve green spaces in and around the Kingston area. He was also very well known as a person who really cared about how cities do their planning when it comes to dealing with issues of construction and development in their communities.

It didn't end there. Mr McEwen that there was a higher calling, and like many people, decided to get involved in provincial politics. As Mr Runciman said, he first ran as a Conservative, probably as a bit of a right-of-centre person you can identify as a politician. He didn't make it the first time out. He tried as an independent and didn't. But one thing we can say about Mr McEwen is that he was a persistent individual, and the third time out he ran as a Liberal and got elected. He served back in the mid-1970s with some of the names in this Legislature that will go down in history. A number of people who served in this Legislature at the time were people we still know today, even though this was some 30 years ago. Mr McEwen served with distinction.

Mr McEwen was a bit of a different politician. Some of us in this House excel in the Legislature, and some of us, if lucky, excel in cabinet and in government. Other people excel in their ridings, and that was Mr McEwen's calling. His calling was to work with his constituents. He was a person who understood his constituents, knew where they were coming from and could identify with them. It didn't matter if you were working class or ruling class, rich or poor, a man or a woman, he was your representative and he did that well for the many years he served in this Legislature.

Eventually, we have to say, he was a person who stuck to his point. In early 1984 or 1985 he was in disagree-

ment with the then government, decided he couldn't take it any more and crossed the floor. I have to say that's not an easy thing to do. Many of us in this Legislature wouldn't contemplate doing that, because we know there is fallout. But he felt strongly and he was a person of his convictions. He disagreed with particular decisions made at that time by that government and said, "I will cross the floor as a show of protest because I am not in agreement."

We may laugh a little bit about that, but that takes a certain amount of courage, although politically, if you look back at comments he made on his retirement—and I have the quote here but I have to find it; of course I can never find quotes when I'm looking for them. Mr McEwen said it was one of the worst things he did, because he recognized at the end that the relationships he made within the Liberal caucus were very important to him and some of those were severed by his crossing the floor. He gave the advice: "If anybody thinks of ever doing that again, my advice to you is not to do it." I think it takes a great man to understand, once he's made a decision, if he was wrong, and to move forward and accept that. It says something about the person. He was certainly a person of conviction and character.

I also want to say that Mr McEwen, when it comes to what he did in retirement, didn't just end there. When he finally left politics in 1985, he was still very involved in his community. In fact, he served as deputy fire chief for the community in a volunteer fire department of some 70 or 80 members at that time, and served it well. He was very well liked by the people in his community who served with him at the fire department and in the parks organizations and others that he served with.

Mr McEwen died in the month of November at the age of 94. He was predeceased by his wife and his son Robert and is survived by three granddaughters and seven great-grandchildren. On behalf of New Democrats, on behalf of members of this assembly and especially on behalf of those he served in his riding, we say to Mr McEwen and his family: Job well done. It was a pleasure having you with us while you were here.

The Speaker: Thank you. I'm sure the family, friends and Ontarians appreciate the kind words said about those former members who served us so well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question to the Premier. This session has been marked by more broken promises, no answers from you in the House on key questions and serious questions being raised about the competency of your government.

Premier, we have asked several questions on this topic throughout this session. We've never received an answer. In fact, we asked you about this issue 14 days ago, so surely you have an answer by now. You're on the record

on several occasions very clearly saying that you will keep your promise to close all coal plants by the end of your term. You said as early as September 2002: "I am committed to doing it come hell or high water." Your energy minister announces he'll keep some plants open, just in case. Can you explain this obvious broken promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me just say how pleased I am with the absolutely outstanding work that is being done by our Minister of Energy on behalf of Ontarians. He's had a tremendous amount of ground to make up for, given the state of affairs as we found them.

Let me just say that unlike my colleagues opposite, who have no interest in cleaning up the air which is causing some terrible states of health, particularly in young people and seniors, we are fully intent on cleaning up the kinds of generation that we have in the province of Ontario. Specifically, we are determined to eliminate coal-fired generation in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Runciman: Vacillate, waffle, blame the opposition, anything but answer the question: That's the consistent pattern. Premier, you personally promised to close the coal plants by 2007. You didn't qualify it. There was no asterisk: "Maybe we'll keep some open, just in case we need them." You said, "They will be closed: no ands, ifs or buts." That's what you said. Premier, do you consider now that you misled the people of Ontario?

The Speaker: The member has used some unparliamentary language. I must ask you to withdraw that.

Mr Runciman: Speaker, I asked for the Premier's view; I didn't accuse him of anything.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I must ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary word.

Mr Runciman: In good conscience, I can't, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Just for the parliamentary decorum that we like to maintain, I will have to name you if you refuse to withdraw those comments.

Mr Runciman was escorted from the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I have some order, please? Final supplementary?

I'll have a new question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There had been a question asked and a supplementary asked. There is an opportunity for a second supplementary. Of course, there's no requirement that it be the same member who asks the supplementary, and in fact my hard-working colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka has a supplementary ready to go.

The Speaker: I appreciate your comment, but I have ruled on it, and I'm going to take a new question.

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HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Premier. I want to talk about your failed policy on hospital financing. This morning, your Minister of Health re-announced \$26 million in funding. But too often, your government doesn't follow through on the commitments it makes. Too often, you break your promises.

Last summer, with great fanfare you and your minister announced \$470 million of new funding for Ontario hospitals. Can you tell me, of that \$470 million, how much of that money has flowed to Ontario hospitals so that they can pay nurses and other health care workers and do a good job for patients?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): While I can confirm for the honourable member that we have not completed all of the reviews of balanced budget plans and interim accountability agreements; I can answer the question directly by saying that more than \$300 million of that money has already flowed.

Mr Baird: The reality is that all around the province of Ontario, hospitals are having to borrow money commercially at high interest rates to pay for the fact that you are hoarding that money at your ministry.

Your wait-list guru, Dr Alan Hudson, is quoted in the Ottawa Citizen in an article entitled "'No Promises' on Faster Care for Ontarians: Wait Times for Key Treatments Unlikely to Improve Before Election." He is quoted as saying directly, "I can't promise we'll get the waiting times down" by 2006.

People are starting to question you and your government's competence on this. I have a direct question for you, Minister: What is an acceptable amount of time for you to see a frail and elderly senior wait for a hip or knee replacement? What is your acceptable time frame for a senior to wait?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Obviously, by the example that we presented in today's announcement, the acceptable time is a lot less than it was under that party while in government. Further, to be on the end of a lecture from the honourable member who was part of a party that, while in government, forced Ontario hospitals to take into their budgets \$721 million in unpaid operating bills from earlier years—we don't need a lecture on that point either.

On the issue of timeliness, it was the honourable member's colleague, who sits in the front row, who had to be bailed out by the Premier of the day, running all over Toronto handing out cheques because of the criticism that money was flowing too slowly.

We make no apology for the fact that Ontario hospitals are working hard on the development of balanced budget plans, which we've reviewed and which have had

peer review involvement. We're flowing funds as those are approved. Any hospital in Ontario that has any difficulty with cash flow knows that there's an established relationship with the ministry where we back them up. That is as it has been, and that is as it will be.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister, his own wait-time guru has acknowledged that neither he nor his government can get waiting times down by 2006. The minister can't stand in his place and say what he believes is an acceptable waiting time for a frail and elderly senior to wait for a hip or knee replacement, and that's an absolute disgrace.

A few weeks ago, you spoke about Sunnybrook and Women's College hospital being a centre for excellence in hip and knee replacements. You said this on CBC radio just a few short weeks ago. As part of you're announcement this morning for hip and knee replacements, Sunnybrook and Women's College is not getting one red cent of new funding. Can you tell us why you are not supporting Sunnybrook and Women's College?

Hon Mr Smitherman: With respect to the first part of the honourable member's question, today we made an announcement that funds, in the balance of this fiscal year, 1,680 additional hips and knees. That's about access for people who need it.

Secondly, it is due to the sheer absence of any progress whatsoever on the part of your party while in government to build a wait-times registry capacity that it is difficult to measure. But as we are investing in new volumes, we're also investing tremendous energy, under the leadership of the established Canadian expert Dr Peter Glynn, to build the wait-times registry that's necessary.

On the third point, not all hospitals in Ontario sought additional volumes after we asked them. Some of them indicated that they did not have the capacity in the balance of this fiscal year to deliver additional surgeries. What we say to all of them today is that as we move forward with additional volumes in 2005-06, all hospitals have the chance to participate.

TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. What is the gas tax money that goes to municipalities supposed to be used for? Will you tell us what action you'll take if municipalities use that gas tax money inappropriately?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We're very pleased to be the first government in the history of this province to form a genuine partnership with our municipalities and to invest two cents of the gas tax, when fully phased in, to be invested, as the member opposite knows full well, in public transit. Fully phased in, that will result in an additional \$312 million made available to Ontario municipalities so that they can invest in public transit. That is good for our air quality, it is good for our personal convenience and it is good for our economy. That's why we did it.

Mr Hampton: The Premier needs to provide that information to his Minister of Labour, Mr Bentley. This is an article from the London Free Press, where Mr Bentley says that he is embarrassed that the McGuinty government child care plan doesn't provide the city of London with enough money to access the federal child care funding that would allow for the creation of new child care spaces. Your Minister of Labour, Mr Bentley, has suggested that the city of London use the gas tax money for child care, not for public transit. Premier, will you tell us, is the gas tax money for child care or public transit? Your Minister of Labour needs to know.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I have every confidence in my Minister of Labour's understanding of the intention behind this policy. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same thing for my colleague opposite.

The money is intended, obviously, for public transit, and it will relax some of the pressures on our municipalities when it comes to other areas for which they must assume responsibility. It will mean that there is less pressure on the city of London, for example, to invest in public transit, because our government is now making funds available to that end, and it means that money that might otherwise have gone there is available for child care. That is exactly what it means. We are proud to say we're working with our municipal partners.

Mr Hampton: Speaker, I want you to clearly understand what the Premier is suggesting. You take the money for the gas tax and you put that in the envelope, and then you take the money that was going to be spent on public transit and you move it over here. When the police see that, they call it money laundering. That is what they call it.

Premier, why don't you just do the right thing? You promised \$300 million of new provincial funding for child care. Instead of promising, "We are going to give you gas tax money for public transit, but then when you get that public transit money, you can take public transit money and move it over to child care," instead of trying to fool people, why don't you stop letting people down, stop dashing their hopes and keep your promise? Where is the \$300 million of new provincial money for child care?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I've got to hand it to the NDP: Who else could turn a story about a provincial government giving \$312 million to Ontario municipalities, an action that is without precedent, and turn it into a bad-news story? Only the NDP. Who else could take a provincial government that is funding 4,000 new subsidized day care spaces in partnership with our municipalities and somehow turn that into a bad-news story? Only the NDP.

It is my hope that at some time, as we close in on December 25, my good friend opposite will be become enthused with the spirit and start to feel good about living in Ontario and start to feel good about some of the things that our government is doing in partnership with the municipalities.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier—the Premier asked the question: Your Minister of Labour did it, and the city councillor in London says it is reprehensible; it's a manipulation of a program.

But I now want to ask you about Bombardier. Very soon, Bombardier will decide where to do the final assembly of their new C series commercial jet. New Democrats believe that bringing 2,500 assembly jobs, 2,500 other jobs and \$250 billion of new economic activity to Ontario is important. Do you know what? The city of Toronto agrees, because they have voted and come up with a plan to bring Bombardier to Downsview. The question is, what is the McGuinty government's plan? No one knows. Premier, time is running out. What is your government's plan to bring the final assembly of the new C series jet to Downsview and Ontario?

1500

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): It's always somewhat intimidating to be receiving economic advice from the NDP. Let me say that we have been in touch with both the federal government and representatives of Bombardier, as well as the city of Toronto. We are working to put together a very competitive response to the offer that is being made available to us.

This follows hard on the heels of the successes we've enjoyed in the auto sector. I can recall a time when the leader of the NDP said that we should not be putting together a strategic auto investment fund. We have secured a \$1-billion investment so far on the part of Ford, which will secure over 1,000 jobs and create thousands more in the spinoff sectors. So we have a good foundation of success on which to build when it comes to these matters, and we look forward to doing more.

Mr Hampton: I didn't hear a plan, and as so often with this Premier, he's wrong on the auto investment, but I think people know how often you're wrong, Premier. The answer you just gave is the same answer your government gave three weeks ago when Ms Horwath, our member for Hamilton East, asked the question. You replied, "Oh, we're talking to Bombardier." A week ago, when I asked the question, your response again was, "Oh, we're talking to Bombardier." Everybody else is doing more than talking. Toronto has a plan. It's clear that the government of Quebec has a plan. They're not asking for a subsidy. They're not asking for a tax grant. They're asking for an investment. What is your government's plan? Merely talking to someone isn't a plan, Premier.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Painful as it may be, I'm going to remind the leader of the NDP about their economic record. When they were in government, 2,000 people joined the ranks of the unemployed every single month. I'm pleased and proud to report that in our very first year, this economy, under this government, has created 116,000 new jobs. To put that in some perspective, that is almost three times as many jobs as were created by the

Tories in their first year. We believe we have a good foundation on which to build when it comes to creating more jobs and to working with the private sector, where it makes sense to do so, and we will continue to do so.

Mr Hampton: This is about jobs at de Havilland and Bombardier. I can say that I'm quite proud to have been part of a government that repositioned de Havilland so jobs were sustained there. We did more than talk; we had a plan. The question is, is your plan an equity investment? Is your plan a loan guarantee? Is your plan export credits? What is your plan? It's 2,500 assembly jobs, 2,500 supplier jobs, \$250 billion of new economic activity: It looks as if you and the Liberals in Ottawa are prepared to simply concede all this to Montreal. What is your plan, Premier? Talk won't do it.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Mr Speaker, to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Clearly the leader of the third party is nothing but pessimistic these days. He has no confidence in Ontario, and furthermore no confidence in our workers. Time and again, I've been standing up in this House and reminding the leader of the third party that our workers are some of the best in the world. That's why people come to Ontario to invest. They've done so in the auto sector. Ford showed Ontario a huge vote of confidence by investing right here in their Oakville plant.

I have every confidence, and I think the people of this province have every confidence, in our workers. That is why, when we put forward our bid to have the Bombardier C series come to Ontario—de Havilland—we will be successful. I assure the member of that.

ONTARIO FILM AND
TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier. My question relates to an industry that, in fact, has been successful in Ontario. We know that tax credits can make a difference. The tax credit that was introduced in the May 1996 budget by Mr Eves as Minister of Finance has resulted in a thriving film industry in the province of Ontario—at least, thriving until the last couple of years.

Premier, these words should be familiar to you: "We will boost the Ontario film and television tax credit from 20% to 33%. We will introduce a new feature film component of the Ontario film and television tax credit, and increase this credit from 20% to 40% of eligible expenditures." Those are the commitments you made on page 13 of your platform about 18 months ago.

You've now been the government for 14 months. There's a crisis in the industry in Ontario. When will you fulfill these two commitments?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm glad to see that my friend from Whitby-Ajax is a Johnny-come-lately to the film industry in this province. We

have a very strong industry in this province. It has been the subject of a number of pressures, including the new value of the Canadian dollar. I want to tell him—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: —and my dear friend from Toronto-Danforth, who is such a strong advocate, and I admire her for that—I recently had a very productive meeting with representatives of the industry. They put a very strong case in front of me and in front of our officials. We agreed that we would take some time, each side, to review a variety of options and that I would respond to the industry with the urgency that the matter requires.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The member from Toronto-Danforth, please.

Mr Flaherty: Minister, this is a crisis. You said you'd have a meeting; you had a meeting. You put out a press release; your press release said you were listening. The time for listening is up; the time for action is now.

You read in the paper today: If things are so great in the industry in Ontario, Minister, why is Saskatchewan becoming the new Hollywood North? Why is the city of Toronto, in their film office, saying that there's a 22% decline in the value of major production spending in the city of Toronto?

It's Christmastime. The Premier says he wants people to be happy at Christmas. There are thousands and thousands of people working—usually small businesses—in the film industry in the province of Ontario, mainly in the greater Toronto area. What do you have to say to them about your promises at Christmastime? What do they say to their families this Christmas, Minister, when you say that you're listening, and you had a meeting? When's the action going to happen?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I think one of the things that they're saying in the film industry is that they are very glad, 14 months ago, that our party won the last election, because we are the only party that referenced that industry and its importance not just to the city of Toronto but to the entire province.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): You're breaking your promise.

Hon Mr Sorbara: We made a commitment in the campaign and, I'll tell my friend from Toronto-Danforth, we are fully cognizant of that. I want to tell you and the members opposite and, much more important than that, the industry itself, that we are determined to see that industry continue to grow and thrive, and we will take the steps necessary to make that happen.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Minister of Correctional Services: Dickson Motsewesho has been convicted of sexual assault and credit card fraud. He's currently doing time in the Don Jail, and while he's doing his time at the Don Jail, he's running a criminal scam from his jail cell, ripping off

women looking for work and bilking companies for thousands of dollars. You're supposed to be protecting society from people like Motsewesho; instead, you're paying their room and board while he's carrying on his criminal enterprise. Minister, why are you letting criminals break the law even after they're locked up?

1510

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'm sure the member will appreciate that this is a situation I'm not exactly pleased with. We are conducting an investigation. We've called in the police. Ministry officials are looking into it. The deputy minister is conducting an investigation.

But you should know that, notwithstanding that these people are in prison, they have the right to use the telephone and we have to be able to monitor what they do—but only if we suspect that something has happened. Now that we know this has happened, we are carrying out what we have to do, and that is, conduct an investigation. We've called in the police, and we'll make sure it is corrected.

Mr Kormos: Minister, you've now been precisely that, the minister, for a year-plus. These are your jail cells, and when it comes to crooks running crime rings from your jail cells, you shrug like Alfred E. Newman and say, "What? Me worry?" You pass the buck on to corrections officials. You say somehow you haven't got the legislation. I suggest you read the amendments from 2002 and the regulations that were passed pursuant to them.

You see, in your jails, Ontario's citizens are paying the overhead costs for this con's criminal empire. Our jail cells under your watch are being used as call centres for crooks. What are you doing to ensure that other criminals aren't running similar criminal call centres and scams from their jail cells, standing at that pay phone for hours at a time, making long-distance and collect calls? What are you doing to ensure that that isn't happening in other jail cells, to other victims, right here and now, under your watch?

Hon Mr Kwinter: We have a process and equipment in place to monitor the calls of prisoners if there is suspicion or evidence that they are doing illegal acts. Having said that, we do not monitor their calls, because they have the right to privacy. We make sure that that is done. We make sure that there are limitations on their calls. And when we find out that something is happening, we bring it to the attention of the officials and the police. That's what we're doing now, and we will make sure that is dealt with.

GO TRANSIT

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On November 29 of this year, you made an announcement regarding an investment that your ministry would be making for a new Kennedy GO Transit station in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. As of now, there's no

convenient way for area residents to transfer from the GO Transit system to the TTC, which makes public transit difficult to use.

As a former city councillor, I found this difficult, over many years, since 1990, as the former Tory government and the former NDP government really did nothing to deal with this issue. I believe that in the past 15 months, we've done more than the previous governments did in the past 15 years.

Minister, my question is fairly straightforward: What benefits will this new Kennedy GO station provide to the Scarborough community, and when can they expect the new station to finally open?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): First of all, I want to thank my colleague from Scarborough for asking this question. We are making a \$2.9-million investment in this GO station in Scarborough, and it will open in mid-2005. This new GO station will connect directly to the TTC, along the Bloor-Danforth and the Scarborough rapid transit lines. That will make it easier for people to transfer between the TTC and GO Transit. As we continue to make these investments, our main objective is to make sure that the ridership on public transit grows.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): Brampton is one of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, whose population has swelled from 268,000 in 1996 to more than 380,000 people today. Every year, an increasing number of residents choose to travel by GO to get to work and school every day. The Brampton community has come to rely on GO Transit, which helps reduce gridlock on our roads and is safer for our environment. For many residents, GO Transit is the key to their livelihood.

But despite the fact that both the downtown and Bramalea GO Transit stations have undergone recent expansions to their parking lots, the need for more parking spaces is clearly evident. Some 3.3 million commuters use the Georgetown line annually, and they expect reliable, convenient transportation. If we don't make it easy for people to use public transit, they're going to return to their cars. Minister, can you tell the commuters of Brampton when they can expect a new GO station?

Hon Mr Takhar: I want to thank the member for asking this question. I know that both the member from Brampton Centre and the member from Brampton West-Mississauga have been working hard to make sure this new GO station opens in Brampton. This will be the third new GO station in Brampton, and it will open in January 2005. This GO station will have about 670 parking spaces, a drop-off area and a bus bay for both GO and local transit buses. Again, we want to make sure that public transit ridership grows and that the city of Brampton is well served.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Premier. I want to come back to another one of

your broken promises. You made a solemn commitment and gave your word to Ontario voters that you would close down all five of our coal-fired generating stations by 2007. You said, and I quote, "I am committed to doing it"—in your words—"come hell or high water." Now your energy minister is flip-flopping and backtracking and waffling on your promise. Your new plan to keep our five coal-fired generating stations open is posing several questions. Premier, how much will your new plan to keep these five coal-fired electricity plants open cost Ontario taxpayers? How much maintenance, how much fuel, how much staff will be required under this scheme where Ontario taxpayers are going to be stuck paying for your broken promise? Can you tell us that?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Energy, Speaker.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): This government remains committed to replacing coal-fired generation and will identify the cleanest, most affordable potential sources in Ontario as a replacement for that coal. If the opposition spent as much time trying to participate in finding solutions to this as they do in advocating more of the same for the polluters, voting against increased fines for polluters, voting against cleaning up our air—this government remains committed. To that end, we announced an 80% increase in the wind capacity in Canada just last month to improve the quality of our air. We believe we've set aggressive targets for—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): First, I'm going to ask the Minister of Energy to direct his answer to the Speaker, and I'm going to ask the member for Nepean-Carleton to watch his words, because he has used some very unparliamentary language too.

Hon Mr Duncan: We remain committed, and I'll remind the member opposite that it was his government's policies that failed this province on the energy file. We have spent the first year cleaning up the messes that member and his predecessors as energy minister committed. We believe in cleaner air. We're working toward that goal.

The Speaker: The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, supplementary.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Premier, I'm forced to ask this question on behalf of the people of Thunder Bay-Atikokan because of the failure of the local MPPs to speak up for their constituents. You promised to close the coal-fired electricity generating stations by 2007. In the northwest, the Thunder Bay and Atikokan plants produce some 525 megawatts of power, about half of the area's current usage. Closing these plants will result in higher energy costs and massive job loss.

Premier, there aren't sufficient transmission lines into the northwest to bring in the replacement power. It could take you up to 10 years to build a new line to connect to Manitoba. Can you explain to the people of Thunder

Bay-Atikokan how you plan to replace the 525 megawatts of power by 2007?

Hon Mr Duncan: The members from Thunder Bay had me up to Atikokan within a month of assuming office. Let's get some facts on the table. Not only can we replace the coal at Atikokan, but there's a good chance we can replace it with clean gas. If you want to do something for tourism in northern Ontario, you want to slow down the advancement of smog days to places like Algonquin Park and Sault Ste Marie.

Atikokan and Thunder Bay can be replaced and the jobs can be maintained. I should tell the member opposite that a line can be run from Manitoba. That's one option we're looking at. There are a lot of options we're looking at that will produce cleaner air, that will produce a better quality of life. We'll make sure that, unlike the member opposite, who wants to decrease tourism in northern Ontario, we maintain the pristine beauty of the air and lakes in that area of the province to ensure they stay for future generations.

1520

The Speaker: New question.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Energy. Portlands Energy Centre, an OPG-affiliated gas plant project, was supposed to have been cogeneration. It promoted itself to the community to be a plant that would both generate electricity and use the steam as a source of heat for downtown buildings. But at a recent public meeting, PEC announced that it was abandoning cogen as well as the solar panels on the roof. Their reason? It would hurt the bottom line.

Minister, don't you think it's time that electricity generators have to consider conservation and efficiency as part of the bottom line, and will you walk the walk on efficiency and require that PEC, if it's built, be a co-generation plant?

Hon Mr Duncan: Our government remains committed to ensuring that Ontario has an adequate supply of clean, renewable energy.

First of all, the project has not started; it hasn't been approved under an RFP. Secondly we've had representations made to us on behalf of the city of Toronto and others about that. We look at them carefully. There are media reports that suggest that Portlands may bid into the RFP; we don't know. That closes tomorrow.

The long and the short of it is, this government has taken a number of steps to promote conservation. We have just passed a bill, which you voted against, creating the conservation bureau and a chief conservation officer in Ontario.

We've signed, under the Energy Efficiency Act, nine new appliances into law after becoming the government. We remain committed to cleaner, more affordable electricity for all the people of this province, and we remain committed to the principles enunciated in Bill 100 around conservation.

Ms Churley: Minister, I asked you about Portlands and the fact that the solar panels aren't going to be built

and they're not going to make it cogen any more. Sustainable energy experts like the Pembina Institute, Ralph Torrie and all of those have laid out how natural gas-fired plants [*inaudible*] to be cogen so that they are as efficient as possible. If you resort to using fuels, you need to get the maximum use out of them.

Speaking of Bill 100—and yes, despite the NDP's efforts to have it amended so Ontario's energy security is not jeopardized by the pursuit of profit, because that's what's happening here—in it, you awarded yourself broad powers in determining what types of proposals the Ontario Power Authority is to put forward.

You can require, under this bill, cogeneration to be in the mix. You can require energy projects to reach conservation goals. Will you do that if this plant is built?

Hon Mr Duncan: This question is a little bit rich, coming from a party that doesn't want us to close Lakeview and clean up the coal plants. They've told us to back down on that agenda. This is a little bit rich, coming from a party that, when it was the government of this province, cancelled every conservation project that the old Ontario Hydro had undertaken. It did that in 1993. This from a party that raised energy prices 43% before they slapped an ineffective price cap on them.

I'll remind the member opposite yet again, this was the party that cancelled the Conawapa deal. Had it gone through at the time, we would now have 1,500 megawatts of clean, renewable electricity available to our sector today.

The Portlands project: Mayor Miller has expressed concerns about the lack of cogeneration. It's the belief of this government that cogeneration and solar should be part of all projects going forward.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Health. Health care, as we all know, is a top issue for Ontarians and a priority for our government. Residents in my riding of Sault Ste Marie told me during the election, and continue to tell me, about their family members being diagnosed with cancer and having to wait weeks and months for lifesaving treatment, or how their frail parents are struggling to walk because they're waiting for a hip or knee replacement. Minister, these types of comments are not—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm just trying to get the discussion between the member from Eglinton-Lawrence and the member from Toronto-Danforth to—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): It's his fault.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. If the member from Sault Ste Marie would like to ask his own party a question, at least they can be quiet.

Mr Oraziotti: Minister, these types of comments are not only being expressed in my riding but also by the

people of Ontario. Today you announced that our government will reduce wait times, a move that is desperately needed in this province. My constituents, like all Ontarians, want to know how many people will benefit from today's announcement on reduced wait times?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Earlier today, at the Queensway site of the Trillium Health Centre in the great riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, I had the opportunity to announce our government's plan for the balance of this fiscal year, 2004-05, which is 5,380 additional procedures, including 2,000 additional cataract surgeries, 1,703 additional cancer surgeries and 1,680 additional hip and knee surgeries. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member from Simcoe-Grey.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The next time we have any interruption, I'm going to move to the next question.

Member from Simcoe-Grey, would you come to order, please.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Included among the impressive list of hospitals that will be asked to play a greater role is the Sault Area Hospital, with 24 additional hips and knees and 25 additional cataract surgeries.

Here's what Hilary Short, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, had to say today: "This new funding will allow Ontario hospitals to perform 5,380 more procedures between now and March, and will"—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Oraziotti: I'm glad our government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that those who are waiting for surgery and treatment will be getting the help they need when they need it. We must ensure that as many Ontarians as possible are served by today's announcement. Minister, what is being done to ensure that today's funding will go directly to those people who are on Ontario's waiting lists?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Each hospital and surgeons within hospitals play an important role in holding on to these lists. The fact of the matter is that, in our efforts to build a wait time registry, we seek to consolidate that information. We have worked with Ontario hospitals to essentially ask for requests for proposals to determine who has additional capacity for volumes and to give us a stronger sense of the needs in those local communities. We've sought to distribute resources in a fashion which closely resembled the greatest needs in the province of Ontario.

I want to repeat a comment that I had a chance to make earlier. While 45 hospitals are asked to play this role through the balance of this fiscal year, as we move forward to 2005-06 and look for additional volumes for our wait times, we look forward to an even greater participation from a broader range of hospitals in the province. I can assure honourable members that a dollar sent to a hospital to address a particular wait-time challenge through the accountability measures we've

enacted will most assuredly be spent in that very direct area.

HIGHWAY 11

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Premier. I recently received a letter and a newspaper clipping marking the anniversary of the tragic death of a family in an accident on Highway 11 south of North Bay, and I quote from that letter:

"A year has passed since this young family was obliterated on Highway 11. At the time, I wrote to Premier Dalton McGuinty, regarding the urgency of completing the 41 miles of four-laning. He, of course, referred my letter to the Minister of Transportation, who wrote some sort of bafflegab back re the plan for refurbishing all Ontario's highways according to a 'timetable.'"

Premier, can you give me a date by which the remaining 41 kilometres of four-laning will be completed between North Bay and Huntsville?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Transportation.

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I'm very pleased to answer this question. Our government really recognizes the importance of Highway 11. We have already budgeted about \$30 million for this highway, and we have already opened 10 kilometres of the new four-lane highway between Trout Creek and South River. We are continuing to four-lane six kilometres between Katrine and Emsdale and expect it to be open next fall.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): That was my note.

Hon Mr Takhar: You didn't write any notes. There were no notes left when you left.

1530

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Miller: Premier, this is an important safety issue, and the people of Nipissing and Parry Sound-Muskoka want a straight answer. Bob and Deanne Hillis of North Bay were forced to call on a member of the opposition to demand action from your government because their member for Nipissing is, to quote from their letter, "merely a spouter of the party line." Their letter continues: "I am asking you if you would once again rise in the Legislature and attempt to get some kind of assurance from these wafflers. With the Christmas season forthcoming, thousands will be travelling that dangerous stretch of highway, our own children included in that number."

I didn't hear an answer as to when the plan would be completed. What is your concrete plan and final completion date for the four-laning of Highway 11 from North Bay to Huntsville?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister of Health, would you come to order, please.

Hon Mr Takhar: As I stated, we have already budgeted \$30 million for this project. The environmental studies are complete and we are moving ahead with this

project. I can understand that those people are getting impatient because they didn't get any action from the previous government in eight and a half years, except maybe writing notes, which they took away with them.

OHIP OFFICE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Minister, more than 800,000 people live in the downtown core but have no OHIP office to go to. Taking more than one day off work to stand in long lineups at OHIP offices located in distant parts of the city hurts workers most particularly, but it hurts the economy as well. When will you provide an OHIP office for downtown Toronto?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the honourable member for this question, as one who represents the downtown. Many of us have had constituents challenged by the circumstances that occurred after the OHIP office in Toronto General was shut down during SARS. We had worked hard to negotiate a new lease. That, at the end of the day, was rejected, but I can confirm for the honourable member that we have secured new space at 777 Bay Street and an OHIP office will be reopening in downtown Toronto within a few months.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I think you heard the minister. Supplementary.

Mr Marchese: I do want to say thank you to the minister. It has taken a while. We've both talked about this for a while. We were hoping that the new office would be up and running by January. What you're saying is that it won't be by January but in a couple of months—maybe February, maybe March—it might be open. Is that what you're saying? Not January but maybe February, maybe March?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I agree with the honourable member that this has taken longer than anyone would have preferred. Access to these important offices is quite crucial. They're working on the buildup. My expectation is that this office would be open before the end of the fiscal year, which of course is March 2005, but as soon as it can possibly be done.

CONSERVATION

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Last Friday you and the Minister of Finance announced enhancements to the managed forest tax incentive program and the conservation land tax incentive program. Protecting our environment is a key priority for the McGuinty government, and an integral part of ensuring a healthy and sustainable environment is the concept of conservation.

MFTIP currently includes more than 10,000 properties totalling over 1.75 million acres in our province. Participants range from Essex county landowners looking after fragmented natural landscapes to owners of shore land in Muskoka to large forest companies in northern Ontario

contributing to our very important northern economy. Minister, can you tell us how the enhancements to the managed forest tax incentive program and the conservation land tax incentive program promote conservation in Ontario?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of the member for Nipissing and to say she's the best member that Nipissing has ever sent since her father represented that proud riding.

These two tax incentive programs for conservation lands and also for managed forests are very important tools, because they're tax incentives for the owners of those lands to basically manage them in sustainable ways. What we've done is to move beyond doing this for private owners, but for the conservation land tax also to allow conservation authorities and non-government organizations that own these conservation lands to benefit from this, so that they can encourage them to create more wealth so they can preserve more of that land for the preservation of green space in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary, member from Guelph-Wellington.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Incidentally, the member from Nipissing would like it noted that Mike Harris was not her father and that Dick Smith was her father.

Minister, as you know, green space is at a premium in many areas of southern Ontario. The government's greenbelt plan will protect green space and contain urban sprawl in the Golden Horseshoe area of southern Ontario. However, my riding lies mainly outside the greenbelt. The Grand River Conservation Authority has identified the maintenance and replanting of forest lands as an important environmental issue in our area. Will the enhancements to the managed tax incentive program and the conservation land tax incentive program do anything to promote the greening of southern Ontario outside the greenbelt?

Hon Mr Ramsay: This is a great question, because exactly what these two programs do is aid the government and private landowners in regreening southern Ontario. That's a commitment I've made as Minister of Natural Resources. We've got to be doing that in progressing through the next year and making sure we regreen southern Ontario. These two tools, which we're going to make better with greater incentives, are going to allow our landowners to better preserve and conserve their land. We do that in partnership, because we know that together we have to preserve our land in the greenbelt and beyond for all of this province.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Energy. I believe he is available. In the meantime, I'm absolutely sure he's listening. I'll put the question, or do you want me to stand the question down?

Interjection: Here he comes.

Mr O'Toole: Minister, I've been listening to your responses on the issue of generation and supply capacity over the last few days. I was shocked today by some of the new and twisting information you're putting on the record. Really, the information with which you responded to the question from the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka today—I understand you announced there would be a new pipeline in northwestern Ontario for natural gas.

Minister, you would know that natural gas pipelines are regulated federally by the National Energy Board. Certainly you've been in contact with them, because you know the plants in Thunder Bay and Atikokan aren't serviced by a natural gas pipeline. Could you clarify for the House today what you meant by saying that you are going to keep the Atikokan and Thunder Bay plants open by providing a supply of natural gas? Is this just another flip-flop and another broken promise or more confusion in the energy generation sector? Answer one of the questions, please.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): If the member took any time in northern Ontario, which obviously he hasn't, as have the members from Thunder Bay, he'd know that a natural gas pipeline is in very close proximity to Atikokan. He doesn't know that. The members from Thunder Bay know that, and I know it.

What I said, to be very clear, is that there are a number of options available with respect to all the coal plants. One of them is the conversion to natural gas. The member obviously hasn't been to Atikokan, nor has the member who raised the question originally. The site at Atikokan is actually built for double the capacity it has right now. There's enough land. It's been laid out properly. It's been zoned. I congratulate the members from Thunder Bay for making sure the government, the Premier and the minister are aware of that. We remain committed to closing and replacing coal-fired generation with cleaner, better sources, so that we can clean up our airshed.

I would ask the member—I would urge him—to go up north and have a look at those natural gas pipelines and all the options that are available, instead of defending the big polluters.

1540

Mr O'Toole: The story gets more convoluted every day. I think he's made it clear for everyone today: They have no plan on the issue of electricity generation. The issue for northwestern Ontario is that it's clear now from what he said that they have every intention of keeping the Atikokan and Thunder Bay plants open. Whatever the source of fuel is not the debate. They're talking about it; they're going to do it.

The issue here, Minister, is that this is just another Liberal broken promise. During the election, you said you were going to close the coal plants—you promised—by 2007. Now what you're saying is you've looked at Atikokan, there's more capacity there and you're going to bring that on-line, and you're going to keep Thunder

Bay open. Just be honest with the people of Ontario: Tell us what your plan is to replace the lost generation from the other coal plants that you intend to close.

Hon Mr Duncan: The only thing convoluted and muddled is that member's question. There are a number of options available to convert and get rid of the coal at Atikokan and at Thunder Bay.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): They want to protect the polluters.

Hon Mr Duncan: We don't want to protect the polluters any more. The member for St Catharines is absolutely right. We want to set an example as a government. It's our corporation that owns that coal-fired generation, and we've made a commitment to replace it with cleaner, more efficient power by 2007. Our undertakings are aggressive—we acknowledge that—but this government believes that we can clean up the air. We can set an example for the Americans.

The other thing the Tories forget to tell people is that in our first year of office, dependence on coal has gone from 25% to 17%.

Finally, the member opposite raises the question about price. Is the member aware that the price of coal has more than doubled in the last year and a half? Is the member aware of the cost to our health care system of childhood asthma? I doubt it. He ought to get his facts straight.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. You may know that in northwestern Ontario the distance between communities is very great. You may also know that a lot of people in northwestern Ontario, when they have to see a medical specialist, are in fact referred to specialists in the city of Winnipeg. Otherwise, they would have to fly all the way to Toronto.

Many people have to take the bus. Currently, Greyhound lines, whether they be Greyhound or Grey Goose, allow people from communities like Dryden, Kenora, Fort Frances and Rainy River to take the bus into Winnipeg in the morning, see a medical specialist and then return from Winnipeg in the evening, so that they're able to go in one day and come back in the evening—no hotel bills, nothing like that.

Greyhound has announced that they're going to cut those bus schedules; they're going to do away with them. Minister, are you prepared to do anything to stop Greyhound Lines from simply cutting these bus schedules and putting literally thousands of people in a very difficult situation in terms of accessing medical specialists, getting to a hospital, having surgery and doing many things that are taken for granted in southern Ontario?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I appreciate the question that the member has asked. It is important for us to make sure that all our communities stay connected and that people have modes of transportation available to them to meet the needs that

they have in the northern communities. So I will work with GO Transit to make sure we develop some sort of plan and address some of those issues that you are raising. Although Greyhound is not under our control and it's a privately owned corporation, I will take that issue up with the GO Transit people and see what we can do about it.

Mr Hampton: I appreciate your offer of GO Transit, but GO Transit doesn't operate anywhere in northern Ontario, certainly not in northwestern Ontario. The crux of the problem is this: For many of these people, many of these communities, there is no alternative transportation, so there's no rail, no aircraft or flying; it's strictly bus.

I can tell you what the government of Manitoba is prepared to do. They have required Greyhound to conduct public hearings in all of the potentially affected communities in Manitoba before they will allow Greyhound to make any such move to cut bus routes. Will you do the same thing in northwestern Ontario? Will you require Greyhound Lines to submit to public hearings in communities like Dryden, Kenora, Fort Frances and Rainy River before you allow them to cut any bus routes and inconvenience literally thousands of people?

Hon Mr Takhar: What I'm prepared to do is this: I'm going to work with my colleague the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and make sure that we can come up with some sort of alternative to address the needs of northern Ontarians. I'm sure that we can develop some sort of a plan with the ONTC to address some of the issues that the member has raised.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY 400 RAMP

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and I shall read it.

"I, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario the following:

"In order to ensure the future economic stability of the town of Pointe au Baril, the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly and the Ministry of Transportation to install two access ramps into Pointe au Baril from the proposed Highway 400, one ramp on the north side and the other on the south. This would provide easy access to our town and allow travellers to continue on their way without inconvenience."

I'll affix my signature to this petition, which has about 160 names on it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Speaker, I have thousands of names on these petitions. I wanted you to know that. It reads:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned"—thousands of people—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

Because I support it, I'm signing this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I am presenting these petitions on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources.

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the provincial Liberal government have approached all Ontario hospitals, advising them that they will no longer provide deficit financing and will therefore have to reduce operating deficits or have funding reduced;

"These cuts will affect 14 full-time and 19 part-time jobs and will impact approximately 5,400 patients. This funding reduction will have similar impacts in all area hospitals, including Kirkland Lake and Englehart;

"Therefore, as citizens concerned about these issues, we petition the Liberal government and Premier Dalton McGuinty to reinstate funding levels to local hospitals to avoid the detrimental impacts that will be inevitably caused by these reductions."

PIT BULLS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present another 4,300 signatures, to bring the total to almost 12,000 signatures from the Golden Horseshoe American Pit Bull Terrier Club. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among any breed or crossbreed; and

"Breed-specific legislation and breed bans are not effective solutions to the problem of dog attacks; and

"The problem of dog attacks is best dealt with through a comprehensive program of education, training, and legislation encouraging responsible ownership of all breeds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to refrain from enacting provincial animal control legislation that is breed specific, and instead

implement a comprehensive bite prevention strategy that encourages responsible ownership of all breeds.”

In support, I put my signature too.

1550

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition signed by over 4,062 people from London. The petition was collected by Cynthia Boufford, whose son has autism. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly,

“I support the resolution to ensure all people with autism receive appropriate services for their disability through the health care system.

“Autism is a medical condition and, as such, these citizens of Ontario should not be deprived of medically necessary treatment based on their age or the severity of their autism.

“Waiting lists for intensive behavioural intervention providing less than the optimum number of hours of treatment, penalizing families for advocating and discharging children just because they turn six are human rights violations and are, quite frankly, just morally wrong.

“Funding autism treatment through the health care system would ensure that service providers follow clearly established medical ethics and regulations.

“Discharges from the intensive behavioural program are occurring daily as children turn six years old. These children may regress, and then the money invested in their therapy programs will have been wasted.

“Act now, because this is an emergency for these families and their children.

“Premier McGuinty, please take immediate action to ensure not one more child or adult with autism is deprived of medically necessary treatment which will enable them to reach their full potential.

“As a citizen of Ontario, I will not allow this injustice to continue.”

As I said earlier, I have over 4,062 petitions. That’s in addition to the over 7,000 that I introduced on behalf of this family earlier this spring.

IMMIGRANTS’ SKILLS

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and

occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario’s professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

I’m pleased to support this and send it to you, Speaker, by page Evan.

HEALTH CARE

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): I have a petition from my riding of Durham. It’s from Dr Dianne Lott, a chiropractor.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy; and

“Whereas abandoning support for these services will place greater demand on other health care sector providers such as physicians, emergency wards and after-hours clinics; and

“Whereas no Ontario citizen should be denied access to medically necessary care because of lack of funds;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services, and to restore funding for these important and necessary medical services.”

I’m pleased to submit and sign that on behalf of my constituents and present it to Jane, the page from Oshawa.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It’s my pleasure to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I have signed my signature, I agree with this petition and I'm very pleased to present it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the funding formula used by the Ministry of Health provided only a 1% increase for Four Counties Health Services in Newbury; and

"Whereas Four Counties Health Services has a projected deficit of \$1.7 million; and

"Whereas the plan to balance the budget of Four Counties Health Services by 2006 recommends the closing of all beds at the hospital; and...

"Whereas the continuing viability and operation is of critical importance to the quality of life of all citizens in the hospital's catchment area;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request a review of the budget/funding and consultation with the hospital board/administration/community to reflect the needs of our rural hospital and community."

I will give this petition to Kay.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have literally thousands of these petitions. I intend to read them all before we go home for Christmas. I'm presenting this on behalf of the Discovery Bay Chiropractic Clinic in Ajax, and it reads as follows:

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re: Support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services"—physiotherapy and optometry—"in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to sign this on behalf of my many constituents.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have another petition, also signed by thousands of people. It reads as follows:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with the petitioners; I have affixed my signature to this.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I appreciate the opportunity to present this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylaxis in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylaxis in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylaxis is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students, which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my name to this petition and present it to Emma.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): It being 4 o'clock, I have to call orders of the day.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I believe we have unanimous consent, and I'd like to move unanimous consent for government order G96 to be called automatically following consideration of government order G82, and that the time remaining to 6 pm for debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 96 be split equally between the recognized parties, and that at the time of the end of the debate, the Speaker put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of Bill 96.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it agreed? Agreed.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM CANCELLATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME DE PERFECTIONNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL

Mr Kennedy moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario en vue d'annuler le programme de perfectionnement professionnel.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Kennedy?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): It gives me great pleasure to rise in my place and speak to the final phase of this particular bill, which is a tidy-up bill after the last government. It is something that we do, not with relish, but simply with a certainty that this was a failed approach and needs to be excised from the kinds of things the provincial government does now and in the future.

It was, for example, called by a certain title. The title was "professional learning program." It was not professional, it did not support learning, and it was barely a program at all in the sense of what the people of Ontario and those concerned with the use of dollars would like to see in terms of effectiveness for teachers. What we are doing instead is comparing and contrasting for you today the kinds of approaches that a responsible provincial government should take with respect to one of its most important workforces.

We are not the direct employer of teachers in this province; they are engaged by school boards. But we have, as the funders of education and as a body responsible for setting policy for education, tremendous influ-

ence over whether or not students are learning in a successful environment. It would seem self-evident to most of us in this House that if you want to have education work at a very high level, you've got to have a plan to motivate, support and encourage your teachers and your other education workers. You would think that would be something we could all take for granted, but the evidence of the last eight years and the legislation that we're putting forward to be repealed today prove the opposite. It was not professional because the government of the day did not show respect for the professionals whom it was intended to help; in fact, quite the opposite. It did not do what the royal commission suggested in terms of support for teacher development. It decided to cut its own path.

This measure that we're finally repealing today, or proposing to repeal, really had its roots in a back-of-an-envelope or back-of-a-serviette campaign promise that the Harris government made in 1999 to test teachers. They played on the idea, which I think probably still resonates, that most of us have been tested by teachers, and why not test them back? What the government of the day didn't say is that they had no idea what they were talking about when it came to actually evaluating teachers. They had a cabinet document that became public that said there is no such thing as a teacher test; there's no pen or pencil test that can be done to assess or evaluate or otherwise inform whether or not teachers are adequate. But that didn't stop the Harris-Eves government, of which there are proud members still in this House. They're proud to defend the idea that they would waste \$30 million in pursuit of this political promise they had made.

What is the alternative? What else can you do besides this derogation of a profession, this putting down of people who actually are meant to work every day with over two million of our kids in this province? Is there an alternative?

We propose that there is, and that is rooted in respect. For example, while the past government couldn't get even a small percentage of teachers to take part in its so-called mandatory program—in fact, teachers in this province, law-abiding citizens, people who have invested in their careers, who invest every day in students, felt strongly that they couldn't, in good conscience, do this even under threat, and this is what the government of the Harris-Eves era resorted to. They had to threaten their workforce. I think we all know that, even in the 18th century, when workers and others had less options, that never did work very well. Most modern enterprises have a much better outlook on how to motivate people, how to get the job done. But that kind of learning didn't get through to the last government. What they tried to do instead was threaten people. No one took part, frankly; a \$30-million program, sitting there. This government spent six million in taxpayer dollars on a program that virtually no one participated in.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Wasted.

Hon Mr Kennedy: Incredibly so.
Interjection.

Hon Mr Kennedy: There's some muttering from the critic opposite who says they were told not to; this idea—not an idea—this ideology resident and reposed in some of the lingering members of the Harris-Eves era. They still linger in this House, and so do their ideas. That's why we're glad to be bringing this forward today, because it's time to excise this. It's time to relieve them of the burden of this somehow still-resident ideology, this funny Tory-Soviet politburo, that they can sit and push buttons, that all they have to do is threaten people or tell them what to do and that will make things better.

We have a different approach when it comes to improving conditions for students. For example, this summer, 7,800 teachers took part voluntarily in training for literacy and numeracy. So this year, after three years of no progress in our schools, we actually saw increased performance by students—a tremendous efforts on the part of families, students, teachers and education assistants, working alongside these students.

Clearly, that's the approach that holds promise for Ontario to regain its education advantage. Before the last eight years and the misguided approaches of the previous government, this was a jurisdiction that could hold its head up high when it came to international tests and so on. We are still respectable, but we no longer lead the pack in this country. We have other provinces that have leapfrogged us, because of measures such as that which we hope to repeal with the legislation we have in front of the House today. When a government is going to take measures that ultimately affect two million students, it has to take its job seriously.

This was not a serious effort on the part of the previous government. They said "professional," but they didn't show that respect for professionals. They actually overrode the Ontario College of Teachers, even though they had manifest influence on that through their own appointees, often appointing people who have professed views against public education and against teachers. They still overrode the consensus of that body, interfered with it in a way they promised they wouldn't and imposed the system themselves. That's what's in question today: this imposition of a system from a government driven by ideology, unable to be practical, unable to take responsibility for results, never having set any goals for the education system—not a single one—in terms of performance, and, not surprisingly, not yielding any respect.

Learning didn't take place because people stayed away from this program in droves. It was expensive, it was set up to control every single facet and it denied the fact that teachers were taking courses on their own. What they did was avoid some of these particular courses because they didn't want that implication. They didn't want the idea that they were succumbing to a notion that they were not professionals, that they were not prepared to discharge their trust. They were prepared to do that, and they showed that by taking courses wherever they

could, but this had a suppressing effect on the training and development of our teaching workforce. Educators in this province were not able to access the same number of courses, simply because it had this taint. We believe strongly and we take entirely the responsibility for creating a climate where more teachers will be more qualified.

I'll give you another example. Under the previous government's administration, in the face of this and other measures it had put forward, one in three new teachers quit the profession in the first five years—a tremendous loss in terms of energy, idealism and real purpose. And students were subject to some of this churning taking place in the system. One in three new teachers is, I think, a human resource failure of the first magnitude. This isn't something that the people opposite were concerned with whatsoever when in government. No measures were taken.

Already we see that there has been a change. The latest report from the College of Teachers is that there are now higher retention rates being reported on behalf of new teachers. We have more work to do there, but certainly we see that this is part and parcel of a failed approach and something that cannot continue if we're going to do what has to be done.

What's the alternative? There is a very good alternative: an induction program that works with new teachers. We have a short preparation period in this province. They're very qualified, they have four years of university, but their actual teacher training is limited to one year. So we think a further induction year of training on the job, of working with experienced teachers, will help, and we will gain the goal that we have.

1610

So I would say to you that we have an alternate path that holds out much more promise for the students of this province. They will have what I think, in their heart of hearts, every member in this House knows is needed when it comes to their children. You're going to entrust your children to a system that has energetic, enthusiastic, motivated people in front of the class. It's high time that the people in this Legislature took responsibility for making a contribution to that environment.

The repeal of PLP opens the doors to a range of other things that can be done for teacher development. We recommend people to our Web site. There are many other things we have put forward there as proposals. The PLP is, we hope, now part of a sad chapter in the history of education in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate. At the outset, I want to say how disappointed I am at the insult that the Minister of Education has just levelled against students across this province and against his teachers. He stood in his place, just a few moments ago, and he dared to make the statement that nothing has happened in education in this province in the last three years; that, over the last number

of years, somehow in this province, students and teachers have failed.

Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in my place today and share with you a release that I have just put out and clearly the Minister of Education either has not recognized or fails to see or chooses to hide. That is the important information regarding the fact that our grade 8s have moved into the top 10 in math and science internationally; that, as a result of the international tests involving some 50 countries, for the first time ever, our grade 4s and our grade 8s are in the top 10.

This Minister of Education—shame on him—stands in his place and says that education in Ontario has gone nowhere. He cannot take credit for this, because these tests were done in 2003, based on teaching and based on curriculum that our government brought to this province. We established standards and encouraged teachers to become the best that they can be. That is the evidence. This Minister of Education should be ashamed of himself for not trumpeting those results and encouraging and praising the students of this province and the teachers of this province for that.

I want to turn my attention now to the fact that this minister has once again failed not only teachers and parents but students by introducing a bill into this Legislature that reads, "An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program." What Minister of Education can take pride, as we just heard him say—that he would come into this Legislature and take pride in eliminating and cancelling a professional learning program for teachers?

I want to read into the record some comments from parents, who surely are one of the most important stakeholders of education in this province. A constituent in Richmond Hill wrote to me recently on this teacher testing issue. She has two children in the public education system, and here's what she said:

"There is a remarkable difference in what is published and what our experience has been. I am appalled at the poor training and commitment that teachers have towards effectively teaching and communicating with parents. Parents are no longer welcome in the education of their children."

She goes on to say, "I think it should be mandated that these teachers and principals be evaluated on a yearly basis. There needs to be more accountability of the profession. This is not atypical for professions to have this quality assurance. I urge you to bring this topic to the forefront and stop the Liberal government pandering to the teachers' union."

Unfortunately, I can't stop this Liberal government. This Liberal government was elected with a majority. They now, on this legislation, have put a time limitation on the amount of time that we can actually debate this. In this place, where we should have the opportunity not only to express our views as members of the Legislature but also to communicate and allow members of the government to hear from the public, this government has now limited the amount of time we can debate this, and

this will become law and they will eliminate this professional learning program. I say to you, it is to the detriment of every teacher, it is to the detriment of every student in this province, it is to the detriment of every parent who cares about the quality of education the students receive, contrary to the minister's comment that somehow our government previously brought in a teacher testing program, a professional learning program, with a view to punishing teachers. How far from the truth can this minister be? He accuses us of wanting to polarize people in our community. Rather than recognizing the importance of professional learning for every teacher and ensuring that teachers in this province are given the resources to become the best they can possibly be, this minister resorts to pandering to those teachers' unions, who we all know sent directives to their membership not to participate in this program. For them, this became a power struggle. How unfortunate that is.

What we said as a government, and what this government should be saying, is no. Teachers' unions will not determine the direction of education in this province. It will be parents, at the end of the day, who have the responsibility for the future of their children. That was the objective of our government: that we partner with parents, that we partner with teachers and that we do what is right for every student in this province.

I want to read into the record a comment from someone who has been involved in the education system for a number of years: Heidi Kreiner-Ley from Richmond Hill. She knew this debate was going to take place this afternoon, and she writes to me:

"Regarding the loss of teacher testing and accountability:

"As a parent and a school council chair since their inception and involved in our schools for over 15 years ... and after meeting with the Premier and the Minister of Education over the years and school board officials on this topic, it is very clear to parents that they wish to have some form of accountability in place that assures that those teaching our children are kept current and updated with the curriculum.

"Teaching testing, while not perfect, provided that security to parents."

She goes on to say, "Being a real estate professional, I am mandated to take courses and obtain a total of 24 approved RECO credits in order to maintain my real estate licence and be able to continue with my profession. I take my job seriously and never complained, as I know I am working with people's life savings and our world is constantly changing. I take pride in being on top of my profession."

Ms Kreiner-Ley goes on to say, "Our children and their education is priceless for the future of this country and our quality of life and theirs. It is not unreasonable to ask our professionals, our teachers, to provide us with proof that they are staying current for the best interests of our children. For those that regularly attend upgrading courses or seminars, let us know through your College of Teachers. For those who do not upgrade regularly, let

there be a system that mandates that they do, that we know we are putting the future of our country (our children) into the hands of professionals who are the very best in their field and are current in their profession.”

That was the objective of the professional learning program, not to punish teachers, not to somehow create a polarization, as the Minister of Education suggests. It was for the purpose of ensuring that our young people, when they graduate from our schools in this province, are able to compete at an international level for the best jobs that are available. How do we do that? We do that by ensuring that the teachers who are teaching them in the classroom are the best qualified in the world. That's what this is all about. The fact that it was mandatory was simply to ensure everyone took advantage of that upgrading.

1620

I admit that over the years the majority of teachers have taken that responsibility seriously, and they've done so on a voluntary basis, but the record from the Ontario College of Teachers council also shows that some 35% of teachers have never upgraded. That is the percentage of teachers we wanted to ensure were included in the professional learning program. Don't those children who are in the classrooms with those teachers who choose not to upgrade deserve the same level of education, of quality of education, that the children who are in the classes of teachers who choose to voluntarily upgrade get? I believe, and we as a government believe, they do. This government obviously doesn't.

I want to leave some room for some of my colleagues to comment as well. However, before I do that, I want to make one comment with regard to an announcement the Minister of Education made today at a press conference, at a photo op. He chose not to make a statement in the House. How disappointed I was at that, because I was looking forward to responding to that announcement, to that ministerial statement. It had to do with this minister's response to a serious issue in our province, and that is bullying. There are far too many times in schools throughout this province when young people, in elementary schools as well as high schools, are afraid for their lives. They're intimidated to go to school, to leave school and to be in school. That is wrong.

We introduced a piece of legislation called the Safe Schools Act. You will recall it. You may also recall that the current Minister of Education, the current Premier and all the Liberal members of that caucus voted against that legislation. What did the Safe Schools Act do? The Safe Schools Act provided a framework within which every school in this province was mandated to develop an anti-bullying policy to ensure the school was safe. It mandated that there were safe school councils within every school. What was the first responsibility of that council? It was to do a safety audit of that school.

In addition to that, the professional learning program that this legislation we're debating this afternoon will eliminate contained curriculum material that allowed teachers to become familiar with, and provided the

resources for them to deal with, bullying behaviour so that they could, in an effective way, help children in our schools who are being intimidated and who have nowhere else to go. The intention was that the place to go was not a bullying hot line, which is what was announced by this government today, but that the most direct line for help would be to the principals and to every teacher in that school. That was the issue.

I want to close my remarks today by saying that this Minister of Education has failed the students of this province through his announcement today, which simply adds an additional layer of bureaucracy and cost, and artificially holds out hope that the issue of bullying is being addressed. He has failed the students and teachers of this province through this legislation we're debating by taking away a professional learning program that was intended to make our teachers the best they could possibly be.

I couldn't be more disappointed today because of the actions of this minister and of this government. I call on members of this Legislature and any Liberal backbencher who would choose to put students and teachers first to vote against this legislation. That would be my call to my fellow colleagues in this Legislature.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I am very happy to rise to speak to Bill 82. I've spoken about this issue in the Legislature before. I think it's critical to our plan for undoing a lot of the damage that's been done to public education in this province over the last eight or nine years. The reason it's critical is that it speaks to the most important relationship in a school and in a school system, and that's the relationship between the student and the teacher.

I just want to start my remarks by quoting from a valedictory address. I know those of you who attend commencement ceremonies are often touched by the addresses given by students graduating. This speech was given at Marc Garneau Collegiate Institute in my riding of Don Valley West a couple of weeks ago by Aishwarya Ramakrishnan. She delivered this valedictory address and, as with many students at the end of their high school careers, she talked about her teachers. She said:

“I don't need to tell you how great high school was. If you were anything like me, you probably think of your friends a million times a day. You look like a lunatic when you randomly smile thinking of great times that have passed. You mentally thank your teachers countless times as your professor speaks gobbledygook that you managed to understand.” She talked about “the dedicated, caring teachers and staff who are cherished and respected more than they know.”

I think Aishwarya captures what all of us know, which is that the environment our children, our students, learn in has everything to do with the teachers. It has everything to do with that willingness of teachers to go the extra mile for students, which they do, to prepare students for moving on. It's that relationship between the teachers and the students that is critical.

Coming back to Bill 82, what we're trying to do here is put in place a relationship between the teaching pro-

fession and the provincial government that is constructive and productive. Over the last number of years, that relationship has been poisoned. So if we think that the relationship between the students and the teachers is at the heart of the education system, then we, as the provincial government, have to facilitate that context, we have to facilitate that environment. In order to do that in a responsible way, we're going to have to undo some of the damage that's been done.

So let's look at why we would be removing the professional learning program that was put in place by the previous government. The first reason that we'd remove it is that it hasn't worked. Teachers have not subscribed to this program. They have not signed up for these courses because they know that they have been doing professional development for years. Ninety percent of teachers in this province have always done professional development. They didn't need to be told in an insulting and patronizing way by the provincial government that they must take these courses in this particular order at this particular time. They had organized their own professional development. They had done it within the schools, within the boards and outside of the boards. Teachers have always done professional development in this province.

The PLP was a solution to a problem that didn't exist. The previous government was trying to undermine that relationship with teachers, undermine the public's confidence in teachers, by suggesting that they didn't take professional development, that they didn't take courses in order to upgrade, in order to keep themselves current, and that just wasn't the case.

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What we need to do is to work with teachers to put in place a real professional development program that speaks to their needs, that speaks to the issues where they see gaps. So what the minister has said is that he's going to work with teachers to put in place new mentoring programs, especially for new teachers, the possibility of an induction year, and increased professional development days.

It's highly ironic that the members from the Progressive Conservative Party talk about the value of professional development, when it was their government that cut professional development days, that made it more difficult for teachers to access professional development courses. Any industry provides opportunities for their workers, for their management, to take part in professional development. What the previous government did was cut those opportunities for teachers, and then they said, "Oh, yes, but you have to go out and take these 14 courses." So they were talking out of both sides of their mouth.

What we're trying to do is put a rational program in place. We have already enhanced summer programs. Last summer, 7,500 teachers enrolled in literacy and numeracy programs to get them ready for this fall. We're looking at, and the minister has announced, the possibility of enhanced money for teacher development. So

we're putting our money where our mouth is. We are working with teachers to put real professional development in place that they can buy into because they know it meets their needs. At the same time, what we're doing is building back the respect for teachers that, for unknown reasons, was lost over the last eight years.

It's inconceivable to me that a government could think that to poison the water, to poison the relationship between government and teachers, and therefore poison the relationships among teachers and between teachers and students in schools, would be a good way to go about improving public education. It's the wrong way to go about improving public education. If you want to make changes in the public education system, you'd better have the teachers onside. What happened in the last regime, the previous government's regime, was that teachers were absolutely not onside. They did not believe in the changes that were being made. They believed that they were being undermined. So what we're having to do as a government is to rebuild the trust with teachers and re-establish that commitment to public education which should be a given in this province. It should be a given that we believe in public education. It is a given for our government, and the removal of this punitive and flawed, not real, professional development program is one step in building that respect.

I am very pleased that we're moving ahead with this. Bill 82 is a cornerstone of our commitment to teachers and to public education. It's interesting that opposition members—and I noted peripherally yesterday when I was speaking the obstruction that has been put in our way in terms of moving this legislation through. On second reading debate, there were 10 hours and 20 minutes of debate, but in fact the opposition members rang bells for three hours of that. So the opposition members who somehow think that we shouldn't move as quickly to get this legislation passed spent a lot of time not debating the bill, but ringing bells in this House, which doesn't make a whole lot of sense in terms of their willingness to debate the bill.

I think the reality is that everyone in this House knows that the plan put in place by the previous government, this professional development plan which really wasn't a plan to support teachers, was flawed. Even the members of the previous government, I think, know that it wasn't working. So if they were actually acting in a rational manner, they would be supporting this bill. I fully expect that members of the NDP will be supporting us, although it was a bit discouraging that some of their members voted against Bill 82 on second reading. I fully expect that, on third reading, we will have support of most of the opposition members, because this is a plan that needs to be revamped. We need to put in place real professional development programs that teachers can buy into and that speak to that fundamental relationship between student and teacher and support the teacher in making that relationship work the very best that it can. That's why I'm happy to support this legislation, and I hope it moves forward expeditiously.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to rise today and add some comments with respect to Bill 82. I would like to start by saying, and other members of my family might say, that I have the greatest respect for teachers as my wife and daughter are both teachers. Having been a trustee I know that for the most part, like in any profession, including MPPs, that there are good MPPs and there are not-so-good ones. The electorate usually has a time of figuring that out, and it's usually called an election. Quite often governments, or individual members, for that matter, crash and burn. In case this profession is not beyond that, as any profession, then that's the role of the college. The Ontario College of Teachers is supposed to be the disciplinary body.

I have repeated this numerous times, and in the very limited time I have today I'm not going to repeat it, but I think it's important for members here who are new to this to look back to the Royal Commission on Learning and to the fine work that was done by that commission, and the minister at the time, by the way, David Cooke, who went about setting up the college. The college, of course, of any profession, is by nature of a definition, Mr Marchese, self-regulating, be they doctors, dentists, nurses, nurse practitioners, engineers or pharmacists. I include in that professional group, respectfully, teachers, and as such the profession itself has an oversight body, a governing body, that isn't all workers' rights issues.

There are disciplinary issues in all professions. In fact, the Speaker today actually named our leader, Bob Runciman, for not following or complying with the rules. So let's not be uncomfortable or confrontational, or insensitive to the issue that one out of every 75,000 teachers might need to have some remediation. Is that possible, do you think? That is the substance of this discussion, and I don't want it to sound harsh. Mr Speaker, I know your wife, Lisa, is a teacher. I know our former minister and our deputy leader, Mrs Witmer, were teachers.

There are many fine professions. I want to make the point, and I'm spending an inordinate amount of time making it, that this is not about criticizing the profession of teaching. In fact, I said it yesterday in a very hastily arranged time allocation motion to shut this debate down, but the Liberal government wanted to hear nothing of it. They've made their decision to cancel teacher testing, and I understand that. They've sold out or made an agreement or have some kind of agreement with the OSSTF and the various federations.

I thought, to put a bit of something new into the discussion in the last two minutes I have, that I'll read a few things here that I think warrant consideration. I know this is a foregone conclusion. They're going to force the vote on this; they're not going to adopt a single amendment or listen to a single person. They've made the deal; they've signed the agreement with the teaching profession—the unions, primarily—and they're going to change the college function back to a sort of union function. The war will not be so overt, but it'll still be an aggressive situation.

If you use any reference at all, read Ian Urquhart's article from yesterday's Toronto Star. It's worth reading for all the members. This is worth reading here; I'm reading directly from Hansard of yesterday and I will cite the person who said it in a couple of minutes: "The challenge is, how do you engage teachers in the process in a meaningful way that makes a difference in their own professional lives?" It goes on to say, "That wasn't part of this bill. In fact, all it simply said was, 'Go out and get 14 credits, seven in the core areas and seven in elective areas, over a five-year period and then you'll be certified.'" That was said by Donna Cansfield, who was a school trustee in a very respectful working relationship with the board. The fact is, she said it wasn't too onerous. I know people who took the courses. The courses weren't like a normal university credit. Some of them were an hour. Some of them were a weekend course. They weren't like some onerous deal here. There was a lot of choice.

To look at a specialist, whether it's in special education, reading or sports—there's one here. You could see certificates in rock climbing, for that matter. It was an elective. That didn't indicate how it impacted, changed or evolved into better teaching practices. That's what you need to do with the learning profession. She goes on to say, "Just as businesses do, they sit down together with the employees and look at—

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The Acting Speaker: Your time is up. Thank you very much to the member for Durham. I appreciate your contribution to the debate.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say right at the outset that I welcome those eager Ontarians to this political forum. There are many people who watch this channel. It's now 20 to 5. I'm happy to participate and happy to know there are a lot of people watching. They enjoy this parliamentary channel. God bless them, they do.

I want to say at the outset that I support this bill. I said this on second reading debate and I'm saying it now.

Hon Mr Caplan: How did you vote?

Mr Marchese: How did we vote? I'm about to clarify how we voted.

To the people of Ontario watching this program, here's what happening. It could be wilful on the part of the Liberal Party in general, or it could be by accident, but I don't believe it is. I think they are deliberately distorting what's happening here. Let me explain why, David.

On October 28, we had second reading debate in this place. We debated the bill. I stated my support. New Democrats supported the bill. What went on on October 28 is the following: At the end of the debate, a parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Education or the Minister of Education, either one, has to stand up and refer the bill to a committee in order to have third reading discussion with the general public.

Now, because the minister wasn't here that day and the parliamentary assistant was not here that day, there

was nobody to refer the bill to committee. If the minister or the parliamentary assistant are not present for whatever reason, God bless them, then eight government members have to stand up and refer the bill to committee. The government members did not do that. The Minister of Education was absent. The parliamentary assistant was absent. Then they allege that we stalled, that we were filibustering, that we didn't support the bill or God knows what they said when they're out there, either sending out letters—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Hold on a minute.

Hon Mr Caplan: I was here.

Mr Marchese: There are a number of friends here across the way who are sort of nodding in disbelief, as if it weren't true.

My friend from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, is it possible that you are not believing what I'm saying? Is it? OK. That is why I urge you or others who may have been present that day or the House leader, David Caplan, who is indicating to me that he was here—I remember it very well. I remember very well that he was here.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Which part didn't he believe?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): The second part.

Mr Marchese: It doesn't matter which part, first or second, you don't believe. How it turned out is exactly how it went.

David, I like you. The Minister of—

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat, please. I would ask the member to refer to the member for Don Valley East by his riding name or by his cabinet responsibility, not by his first name or his surname.

Mr Marchese: The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. That's a long one. David Caplan, the minister of infrastructure—

The Acting Speaker: Did you not hear me the first time? In the future, please refer to him by his riding name or his cabinet responsibility.

Mr Marchese: And so my friend—through you, Speaker—the minister of infrastructure and the rest of it, was here that day, and rather than assuming responsibility for—how shall I put it?—the way it went, to be polite, he's saying that he didn't commit any error, that his government did not commit any error. All I'm saying to you is, assume responsibility for what you did and what you ought to have done that you did not do, as a result of which this bill is before us in committee of the whole.

Now, for those of you watching, because the minister was not here—

Mr McMeekin: Are you against this bill?

Mr Marchese: Ah, my buddy from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, it's important for the citizens of Ontario to know that it is not due to the opposition parties—it isn't due to what we might have done or said—that this bill is here in committee of the whole. It

was due to the minister not being present to be able to refer it to committee, and it was due to the fact that the minister of infrastructure, who was here, did not indicate to eight of his members to stand and get it out to committee.

Then they communicated with all sorts of federations, both public and Catholic, and said to them, "The NDP," and presumably the Tories, "are stalling. They're filibustering. They didn't want this to go to committee." How is it that the government simply can't stand up and honestly say, "We just didn't do this right"? That's what troubles me. I am troubled by that, because I would much prefer that you be honest with them and say, "Look, this is the way it went," rather than saying, "The NDP didn't want to send this to committee."

Hon Mr Caplan: You blocked it.

Mr Marchese: You're killing me, Minister. You're killing me, I'm telling you. You've got a tremendous testicular kind of strength to be able to stand there or sit there and say, "You guys blocked it." We didn't block it. You didn't send it to the right place, because you didn't know what you had to do.

For the record—and it took me so long to be able to put this on the record. Imagine, eight minutes to straighten the record out, and this government does this on a regular basis. They stand up and make allegations about a political party; in this case, the NDP. They say, "The NDP didn't do this when they were in government," and it doesn't matter whether it's real or not. They just stand up and make allegations, and it's up to the NDP to disprove it. Why would we spend so much time having to do that, but brilliantly? All they have to do, wilfully, is stand up and say whatever they like.

That's what disturbs me about the way the Liberals are behaving. I'd much prefer that you stand up and defend yourselves, defend your record, rather than distort the realities of the other political parties, even our own from 1990 to 1995, and pretend—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The bill. My good buddy from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot—

Mr McMeekin: Where do you stand on the bill?

Mr Marchese: I'm going to tell you. I've got so much time. Sit back and relax like the people of Ontario. They're watching this program and they are relaxed. Sit back and relax.

Two things, quickly. We as New Democrats disagreed with what the Conservative government did in government because we felt, and you know, that what you were doing wasn't very nice.

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Mr McMeekin: But do you support the bill?

Mr Marchese: I already said so. I already said we support the bill. I don't understand. Where were you? Where were you when we said we support this bill a mere nine minutes ago? It's exhausting having to deal with that.

Two things: When the government introduced this bill that is now being repealed, it had two components. One

was a program that would include an initial certification test and require all new applicants for teaching certificates to take a standardized qualifying test. That was one part. The other part was a teacher recertification program, ie, you had to take 14 courses—seven obligatory and seven optional—which they call teacher testing, as well.

This government has eliminated one component of the bill but has been silent on the other, except that on Saturday the minister, in a Toronto Star article—just a tiny, little article; I couldn't believe it—spoke to what I wanted to speak to today, which I'm going to do, because the other component is worse in terms of what should be eliminated, and that is the teachers' test for those who have gone to the faculty, basically passed much of their teacher testing that they've gone through in terms of the practicum, and then they have to write this test that 99% of them pass. They've got to pay \$200, and 99% of them pass it.

These people are highly qualified, member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, and that's why 99% of them pass the test. After having gone through a rigorous program at the faculties in Ontario, where they do the practicum on a regular basis and get tested by their teacher, who has to supervise their work, why would we, at the end, require them to pay 200 bucks to pass a test they are going to pass anyway? They are more qualified than anyone else. Why would you do that, and why would the Liberals not speak to that?

That's what troubled me. That's why I wanted to speak to third reading debate of this bill, because the minister, in his discussion paper—you know there are lots of discussion papers they put out; it never ends—on page 3 says the following: "Having an entry test to teaching is consistent with our approach of treating teachers as responsible professionals and is helpful to ensure student familiarity with Ontario curriculum and provincial educational objectives."

You're nodding as if you know what I'm talking about, member from Ancaster, but the minister doesn't like teacher tests. I think the teacher test the Tories devised was all political and had nothing to do with pedagogy.

Then you have a minister claiming he knows what he is talking about, but he says, "Having an entry test to teaching is consistent with our approach of treating teachers as responsible professionals and is helpful to ensure student familiarity with Ontario curriculum and professional educational objectives."

Given what he appears to know or pretends to know, why would he make such a claim, and why would my friend from Brant, whom I will name by his title, who is a former principal, not help the Minister of Education to understand that, and say to the minister, "We've got to deal with this. We've got to change it?"

So I was troubled, and I wanted it to go to third reading for one afternoon so I could get advice and opinion from the various teachers and/or federations who wanted to speak to this teacher test. I indicated to two federations, OSSTF and OECTA, the Catholic teacher

federation, that all I wanted to do was have one afternoon, member from Brant, former principal, to tell the minister that I think he has dealt with one component of this bill but he is keeping the teacher test.

And why? I wanted to say to teachers, "Do you support the minister with this?" because the minister—I know you weren't listening too well, member from Brant, because you were talking to the clerk and that's OK, I understand that, but I don't know whether you have an opinion on that or not, and all the time has been taken up, so you won't be able to comment, but it puzzles me. And the other teachers who are here, I'm puzzled by your lack of comment on this matter. Do you support the teacher test for qualifying teachers who are about to enter the profession? Do you think it is a good—

Mr McMeekin: Not the test; a test.

Mr Marchese: That "a test" is the test.

I believe, and hope, that the minister will deal with this. This little clipping from the Saturday Toronto Star says, "The province is scrapping a controversial qualifying test for new teachers, two years after it was introduced.... 'It was not much of a quality check,'" he said.

So you have a discussion paper saying that having an entry test to teaching is consistent with our approach of treating teachers as responsible professionals and then a little article in the Saturday paper saying we're going to scrap that test.

Mr McMeekin: That's my point. It's going to be a new test.

Mr Marchese: Exactly, member from Ancaster. It will be a Liberal test. It won't be a Conservative test; it will be a Liberal test. What's the difference between a Tory test and a Liberal test except the labels "Liberal" and "Tory"?

So what is it, Minister, that you're saying? What do you want? What do you stand for? Where is your clarity? I have not yet seen a minister who can baffle through his entire political career—and he does it so well. At the end of it, everyone is standing there in consternation, wondering, "Did he say that or didn't he say that? Does he support this or does he support that? We don't know what he stands for. We just don't know." That's the problem with Liberal politics and Liberal policies. You're never going to know at the end of it what they stand for.

So is this test gone or isn't it? Well, maybe. He says the Liberal government plans to replace the test by next September with an induction year. Oh? What does that mean? In his discussion paper, it says that potentially the test could be moved to after the end of the first practice or induction year. This paper is not very clear, as you can see. What does it mean, "at the end of the first practice"? "At the end of the practice" is in the induction year?

My sense is that he could be talking about teacher practice, when the teachers are doing their practicum. You have in the first session one or two practicum experiences, and then in the second term you have two more and so on. So what is he saying? At the end of the first practice versus the second versus the third? What is the first practice?

Do you understand the abstruse nature of the way it is written and the way he speaks? We never really know. That is all I wanted to be able to put on the record, for committee, so as to hear from teachers about what they had to say and to hear from the minister about what he had to say and to hear from Liberals about what they want to say about this. If they were clear, this bill would include two components of the previous Conservative bill; that is, the recertification—which the 14 courses are all about, and the initial certification test that teachers now have to take. Why did it not in this particular bill repeal both of those practices? Because—

Mr McMeekin: Did you ask him?

Mr Marchese: Did I ask him? It's not my job to ask him what he's doing; my job is to criticize him for not including both components rather than the one component. The reason he kept the teacher test is that he wants to be seen by the parents as somehow maintaining the standards, you see. He doesn't want to be seen to have a less or worse standard than the Conservative Party, because all the Conservatives ever talked about was standards and this teacher test was going to arrive at these standards. Some 99% of those qualifying teachers pass this test, and that's going to show us and prove that somehow the standards have gone up? When 99% of these qualifying teachers pass this test, this has set the bar higher than ever before? It has not, did not, will not. It was all about politics and what the minister is still doing is about politics.

Interjections.

1700

Mr Marchese: I know Liberals hate to hear it. You would want to make sure that the opposition party could simply acquiesce ever so quietly and simply say, "Oh, the Liberals are so, so good." Nihil secundus. That's a good Latin expression meaning second to none. They think they are so good.

But for the record, again, we support this part of the bill.

Applause.

Mr Marchese: No, don't clap for me. We're waiting to see what the minister has to say about this new Liberal test. We're waiting to see what professional development he is going to be working on with the federations, boards of education and the Ontario College of Teachers. We await eagerly. It's 14 months into the mandate. We're breaking soon. I don't know what the minister is going to come up with.

Speaker, thank you for all your assistance today.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time that the House has allocated for this third reading debate of Bill 82.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 13, 2004, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Kennedy has moved third reading of Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received a notice from the chief government whip to defer this vote until tomorrow at deferred votes.

LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL

Mr Watson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act /
Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis
d'alcool.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I recognize Mr Watson to initiate this debate.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): It's my pleasure today to speak to you in favour of Bill 96, the Liquor Licence Amendment Act, 2004. For those members of the House who aren't familiar with Bill 96 and for those people who are watching us on television today, this is also known as the BYOW piece of legislation, to allow people to bring their own wine. But it's also legislation that is about balancing consumer choice in liquor service with stronger enforcement measures and to increase public safety.

I'm delighted to share my time with my parliamentary assistant, Mr McMeekin.

La loi sur les permis d'alcool décrit les règles concernant la vente et le service des boissons alcoolisées dans la province de l'Ontario. Au cours des années, la loi est devenue de plus en plus désuète. Elle n'est plus conforme au marché qui subit des changements constants.

By modernizing the Liquor Licence Act, we're taking the first step in bringing Ontario's liquor laws into the 21st century. If Bill 96 is passed, the government will proceed with regulatory changes to introduce bring-your-own-wine to Ontario. This service would allow patrons to bring bottled wine into licensed restaurants and consume it there. And although not part of this bill, the government also hopes to bring another consumer choice to Ontario, the option of take-home-the-rest. This initiative would allow patrons to remove an unfinished bottle of wine from licensed establishments as long as the licensee had properly resealed the bottle.

This option would mean a certain coming of age for Ontario. If customers were able to bring their own wine and take home what they don't drink, they might be more inclined to dine out in the first place, increasing restaurant revenue. Moreover, from a public and social responsibility point of view, they wouldn't feel compelled to finish the whole bottle on-site, encouraging responsible drinking. Bring-your-own-wine and take-home-the-rest are based on the same principle, that being choice.

BYOW has been a success in jurisdictions around the world: New York, Australia, New Zealand, Alberta,

France, Italy, and for almost 20 years in the province of Quebec.

But don't just take my word for it. The response from restaurants across the province has been extremely positive. Stephen Beckta, the owner of Beckta Dining and Wine in Ottawa, noted, "I'm all for allowing customers the option to bring their own wine into our restaurant for a corkage fee. The practice allows people to dine out more often and with greater flexibility. Having worked as a sommelier and restaurant manager in New York, I know first-hand that this can be beneficial to both guests and restaurant alike. That is why I am a firm supporter of this initiative."

Paul and David Valentini, owners and operators of Mammina's Ristorante in Toronto, just down the road from us at Queen's Park, support the new legislation—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's a good restaurant too.

Hon Mr Watson: Absolutely—as does Mr Anish Mehra, general manager of the East India Company restaurant in Ottawa; Michael Pickard, chef at InFusion Bistro, also in my hometown of Ottawa; Johan Maes, owner of Petit Dejeuner here in Toronto; and Mark Samuel, owner of the Rectory Café on Toronto Island, who appeared before the standing committee.

The list of restaurateurs excited by this legislation reflects the diversity of support that exists for bringing Ontario's liquor licence laws into the 21st century. These restaurants recognize that staying innovative is the best way to stay ahead.

Participation in either option would be entirely voluntary on the part of licensed restaurants. The government would not force any restaurant, any business, to offer these options. One restaurateur in Windsor, for instance, told me she wants to offer BYOW just on Mondays, because Monday is traditionally a slow day in the restaurant industry and this was an opportunity for her to bring more customers in on that slow day.

Mr Leal: Flexibility.

Hon Mr Watson: Absolutely.

Another restaurant wants to strike a marketing agreement with local wineries in the Niagara region so that those wineries would end up putting a list of restaurants that offer BYOW in their establishments. So the person would go to one of the great wineries of the Niagara region, buy a bottle of wine there and bring it to one of the restaurants that is supportive of this piece of legislation. Both of these scenarios are permissible under the bill.

If passed, this bill will maintain current responsibility requirements if these options come into effect. Careful safeguards would be put in place for these initiatives to ensure safe communities.

The legislation addresses the issue of responsibility. Licensees would still be responsible for making certain that liquor is not supplied to an intoxicated person or to someone under the age of 19, whether that person purchased wine from the licensee or brought wine with them to the restaurant. Each bottle would have to be

opened by the licensee or by a server, who would keep track of how much was being consumed, just as is the case currently. Only unopened, commercially made wine would qualify.

The point to stress is that licensed restaurants would remain responsible for keeping people from consuming too much. They would remain accountable to responsible service, as they are now. As we all know, modernization of our liquor laws is more than about choice. It's also about balancing the choice with stronger enforcement. I know my parliamentary assistant is going to be talking about some of the issues we heard at committee with respect to police associations and so on, but the fact is that since the Liquor Licence Act has not had significant amendments in 14 years, enforcement tools in this sector have also fallen behind.

Consider gaming, for instance, which is overseen by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. Under the Gaming Control Act, the registrar of alcohol and gaming has the power to immediately suspend the registration when it is in the public interest to do so. This component of the legislation has won wholehearted endorsement from community leaders such as Jeff Leiper of the Hintonburg Community Association, who told me in a written submission that they have a "particular interest in seeing the provisions related to stricter enforcement in place as they relate to immediate licence suspensions."

Comparable powers are needed on the alcohol side of the commission's mandate to keep our communities safe. That is why we are proposing an amendment to allow the registrar to immediately suspend a liquor licence, if necessary in the public interest; that is, where there is a threat and a danger to public safety.

Toronto city councillor Kyle Rae stated at the committee, "I'm looking forward to your allowing for the immediate suspension of a licence to ensure public safety in the hands of the AGCO. That is a very important piece of your new legislation."

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Currently, under the act, two board members can order an interim suspension of a liquor licence if necessary in the public interest. If an interim suspension is ordered, a full hearing by the board must take place within 15 days. The problem with this process is that the procedure has a built-in delay because two board members must be reached before anything can be done. In the meantime, dangerous or disruptive situations may continue. This government shares all of our concerns about violence. The amendment we propose would enable the registrar of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to immediately suspend a liquor licence if necessary in the public interest, as in situations where public safety is threatened.

Ceci permettrait à la commission de réagir de façon plus rapide et efficace aux problèmes de sécurité publique.

To ensure fairness, an immediate suspension by the registrar would be followed within 15 days by a full hearing to review the suspension. This reform would be a

step toward equipping the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario with the modern tools it needs to enforce the liquor laws effectively and protect the public.

Mais le travail n'est pas terminé en ce qui concerne les situations troublantes et dangereuses dans des locaux pourvus d'un permis.

The police currently have the power to clear premises where the act or regulations have been contravened or public safety is at risk. However, ironically, the law does not make it an offence for people to fail to leave the premises or for them to return after being asked to leave. This loophole can undermine police efforts to vacate premises where disruptive and dangerous behaviour is taking place. We intend to fix this by making it an offence to fail to leave a premise if ordered to do so by a police officer or to return the same day. If people don't obey, charges could be laid. The Toronto Police Service asked for this change in 1997, and we intend to deliver.

Finally, the issue of underage drinking is one of primary importance to this government. The act contains a number of offences pertaining to liquor and underage persons. For instance, it prohibits the sale or supply of liquor to anyone under 19, knowingly permitting a person under 19 to have or consume liquor on licensed premises, and knowingly permitting a person under 19 to use a brew-on-premise facility to make beer or wine. This act provides for maximum and minimum fines for these violations. In 1997, the maximum fines were increased but the minimum fine of \$500 for a licensee and \$100 for a non-licensee remained the same. The courts have tended to levy fines at the lower end of the range, so this change has had little impact. We propose to double the minimum fines for these offences to \$1,000 for a licensee and \$200 for a non-licensee. The aim, quite simply, is deterrence. We want to make it expensive to commit these violations.

When I had the honour and privilege of serving as the president and CEO of the Canadian Tourism Commission, I saw first-hand some of the challenges and opportunities facing the tourism industry in this province and this country. The challenges have compounded in recent months with the SARS outbreak last year, heightened security concerns at our borders, and now the rising Canadian dollar. It is our responsibility to do all that we can to enhance opportunity for Ontario's businesses, and I remain convinced that increased choice for consumers is a tried and true source for growth, especially in terms of tourism.

Tom Hogan of Hogan Restaurant Consulting sums up our approach nicely: "As a restaurant owner and operator, I feel Bill 96 will give the public more reason to dine out, and therefore drive more sales into our industry."

Rod Seiling, a former Maple Leaf great and current president of the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, noted that his organization supports the bill because "the principle behind the legislation is to offer the customer more choice. We are an industry that is built on public service."

The former Minister of Consumer and Business Services, who is in the House now, the honourable member from Lincoln, I believe—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): Erie-Lincoln.

Hon Mr Watson: —Erie-Lincoln—specifically singled out tourism benefits when he supported the legislation, stating, "Let's look at the best practices. I think it's good for consumers, good for tourism," and I agree with him.

Our government is committed to further stages of Liquor Licence Act reform, in consultation with stakeholders and the public. This first stage is the foundation upon which we want to build. I urge all member of the House to join in our efforts to bring the liquor laws of Ontario into the 21st century.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I wish that in fact this bill did bring the act into the 21st century. I think one of the promises made by the Premier was that there would be an overhaul of this bill.

As a matter of fact, a number of people have been working now for almost a couple of years toward a total overhaul of many of our antiquated liquor licence and liquor control functions under this bill. But this bill is strictly piecemeal. It deals with one isolated topic and really doesn't give us the overall bill that everybody has been working toward. Hopefully, the minister will remedy this in the near future by dealing with the problems with the act.

This is An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act. It basically deals with bringing your own wine, plus some added features which I will go into.

Initially, when you look at it, bringing your own wine to a restaurant seems somewhat comforting, but when you take a good look at it, there are a number of problems. First of all, what kind of wine are we bringing to the restaurant? I think a lot of people will be disappointed when they determine that the government, in its wisdom, is restricting the bringing of wine to those purchased, really, through the Liquor Licence Act. In other words, you couldn't bring your own homebrew to the restaurant of your choice. Secondly, I think a lot of people will be disappointed when they hear that in other jurisdictions, only a small percentage of the dining establishments have taken advantage of the right of bringing your own wine.

You see, it is going to be a little more red tape. You don't just decide that you will provide the service of bringing your own wine; you're going to have to get a special permit. As I said, I think it's Australia where only 6% have taken advantage of it. It's going to lead to a lot of confusion. People are going to arrive—I can see it—with their own wine and be refused service because that restaurant does not offer it. This is a voluntary program. No restaurant can be forced to take part in this program, and therefore there is bound to be a great deal of confusion.

There is one provision which I find intriguing. It's an excellent idea that the ministry has called TTRH, which

is "take the rest home." The only problem is, it is a good idea, but it is really unfortunate that the minister has restricted that program to the 6% that have the special licence. In other words, for some reason, if you go to a restaurant with a special licence, you can take your wine home. But the other 80% or 90% of the dining public who choose to go to a restaurant that does not provide that service, if they order a bottle of wine or decide to order a second one, all of a sudden they have a half a bottle of wine, they're finished dining and on their way home. What do they do? For some reason, the minister and this government, in their wisdom, says the safety aspect of take-the-rest-home that we apply to 6%, 7% or 15%, doesn't apply to the rest of you. We don't seem to be as concerned with your safety as we are with the small percentage that have taken the special licence. It's really a peculiar way of looking at safety on our highways. I think that has to be corrected, because if it's a good idea for bring-your-own-wine, surely it's a good idea for all dining establishments across this province.

As I said, this is a voluntary program and, as dining establishments make a great deal of their profit and tips for the servers from the service of wine, if you do bring your own wine, one would expect them to charge corkage, which is, I think, the formal term for the charge for opening and serving the bottle of wine. The corkage charge is not in any way being governed. Again, it's voluntary. The restaurateur could charge no corkage. I can see that possibility, and that would fit right in with the concerns of MADD.

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MADD has appeared in front of the committee and said this: "It is well known that lower prices of liquor will cause consumption to increase. That is, in fact, the premise. The lower the prices, the more people will consume. And the more they consume, the greater the dangers on our public thoroughfares." There is no regulation of corkage on any of the dining establishments who choose to take part. They may charge, as I say, on a very quiet night, nil, or they may charge, on a busy night, a great deal. Either way, it is going to lead to confusion.

By the way, I feel for the servers in our hospitality industry in this province. I believe that this simple bill, though seemingly a good idea, has not in fact been well thought out by this government and is going to cause a great deal of hardship on the servers throughout Ontario. Many of the servers work for minimum wage. They rely upon tips, and those tips are being put in jeopardy, of course, because all of a sudden the combination of the food and liquor bills will be less because of the bringing in of the wine. It's unfortunate, but again I would suggest that the ramifications of the bill have not been thoroughly canvassed. I think this bill was proposed in haste without valid and wide consultation, and it is going to lead to hardship and possibly catastrophe, according to the MADD group.

Some of the restaurateurs appeared in front of the committee and talked about insurance. I just want to deal with that in a moment. There was some representation

that the insurance companies have not taken a position as of this time as to whether or not this would affect their insurance. But I am always concerned with the fact that a person bringing their own property into a dining establishment might quite naturally have some form of ownership of that bottle and would take aversely being instructed as to when to drink the wine or no. You see, all of a sudden you are putting on the proprietors and the servers of that business the onus of telling a person, "You cannot use the property that you have brought into this restaurant." I understand those are the rules, and that is fair under the act. However—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's an added onus.

Mr Martiniuk: It is an added onus—thank you—on the servers and the proprietor and could very well impact severely and negatively on their insurance premiums. Heaven knows, everyone today is concerned with their insurance, as it grows out of control for many people.

The act introduces a novel concept which really doesn't appear in much of the law in Ontario. The law at present provides that two board members under the Liquor Licence Act can suspend a licence, and there has to be a further hearing within 15 days by a full board to either remove that suspension or reaffirm it. Unfortunately—and it sounds like it's happening rather quickly; 15 days—there is no provision in this act or the former act that requires the board to make a decision during the 15 days. They merely must have a hearing, and we had evidence in front of the committee that indicated it was not unusual for a reserved decision to be taken by the board and, therefore, justice is delayed for weeks, if not months.

In the hospitality industry, that is not merely an inconvenience that could be the end of that particular business, but the real concern is the fact that we are now taking the right to suspend away from the two board members—individuals who have been appointed, who have been trained, who are versed in hearing evidence and making a judicial decision under the natural law, and substituting that with the registrar, who is now going to make the decision and who is also prosecuting.

I get this picture in my mind. I think they did a movie about it—I think it was the Marx Brothers, as a matter of fact—where he is pleading the case in front of the judge and is also being the judge. He has to run back and forth to play both roles, and you cannot play both roles. You are either a prosecutor or a judge. We are asking the registrar to be both, and that is an impossibility and will come to no good.

In conclusion, on those points, which I feel are valid points brought before the committee, I will be voting against this bill.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm going to take some of our time, and Mr Marchese from Trinity-Spadina will be speaking to this as well.

I had the opportunity to sit through most of the committee hearings. The NDP asked for and got committee hearings, and I think that was really important, to have an opportunity for people to come in and express their

views. There's no doubt about it, and the minister mentioned some of those who came forward, most people who came forward supported the legislation. However, there were those who came with concerns, and the two that stick in my mind most—I feel their voices need to be heard here today—are MADD and HERE, the hotel and restaurant workers.

First of all, before I speak to their concerns, let me say that I lived in Montreal for a while, and anybody who has lived in Montreal—my daughter was born in Montreal. It's a great city, not as great as Toronto, of course, but a great city. I loved it there. My French was a lot better when I lived in Montreal, but it was just part of the norm there. Let me put that on the table now—so to speak, on the table.

Bringing your own wine to restaurants has been around in parts of Canada, including Montreal, for a long time, and I participated in that exercise on a fairly regular basis. It just seemed so normal. I still remember the restaurant and the little red and white checkered tablecloth. We would just bring our wine and drink it.

One of the things I recall is that we didn't have enough money to bring really expensive wine, but when we brought a little more expensive wine than normal, we wanted to make darned sure all that wine was drunk. One of the issues for me, and I think this is one of the good things about the legislation, is that right now you get a bottle of wine in a restaurant and you spend a fair amount of money on the bottle of wine and you really don't want to finish it because you feel you have had enough to drink. The temptation, if you paid a good dollar for that, is to finish it up. Now, I myself have never done that and then driven, but I know people who have. You want to finish that wine because you paid the money for it.

That's one of the positive things, in my view, about having the opportunity. I understand, and there was a clarification in the committee, that establishments that choose to do this, because it is voluntary, can also re-cork the bottle of wine as well, which I think actually, from my own experience, is a good thing.

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I've got to admit that I don't find this a big deal. I've done it for so many years myself in other jurisdictions. But it is a big deal to some people. MADD, of course, in a press release, talked about being very disappointed in the minister's broken promise, and I'm sure the minister is aware of that. We all take MADD's concerns very seriously, whether or not we always agree with them. I usually do. Their goal is a laudable goal—thank God they're there—and that is to stop drinking and driving. We all support that, and I think it's really good that they're out there looking at and scrutinizing every piece of legislation that comes before us, every little regulation they see that may in fact increase drinking and driving. It's absolutely critical.

They have expressed some concerns about this, and one of their major concerns is what they consider to be cherry-picking by the minister, that this is done in a piecemeal way and they weren't consulted. They have

some very big concerns about this. I like one of the quotes they put in this press release:

"MADD Canada's policy positions on the country's liquor laws stem from one of the organization's statements of belief: Drinking is a private matter—but drinking and driving is a public concern. Mr Murie observes, 'Unfortunately, as alcohol products are made more readily and easily available, experience suggests the incidents of impaired driving will increase. A BYOB law is an initiative that increases the risks for everyone who travels on the road. MADD Canada believes and fears it will lead to increases in impaired driving incidents.'"

Now, I've got to tell you, with the right regulations in place, as I said earlier, I believe that in fact it could possibly cut down on drinking and driving. But they suggested some real problems with this, in terms of the connection between cheaper alcohol and more consumption and those kinds of things.

I think we have to listen very carefully when MADD comes forward and makes recommendations and expresses concerns about more drinking and driving. Many of the people from their organization have lost loved ones to drunk drivers. If anybody has known anyone who has gone through that kind of devastation, they can well understand why; some people think they're picky from time to time, but it's their job to be so. So I think we have to listen very carefully to what they have to say.

But for me the two biggest issues here overall—because overall I don't think it's a big deal, one way or the other—are that it can help the hospitality issue, and making sure that the regs are in place so it cannot in any way lead to more drinking and driving. In fact, I'd like to see it improve. I would therefore call on all of the taxi companies and all of the bars and restaurants out there to bring in even stronger programs, especially as we enter into this Christmas and Hanukkah and holiday season, to have stronger programs for taxis, to reduce the fares and to link up with the restaurants and bars to make sure we don't have any drinking and driving during the holiday season.

The other concern I have is with HERE, and that is the concern that the workers have expressed directly. There is no question about it: They're going to lose money. As you know, most waiters only make minimum wage and they rely on tips. They made suggestions that they get all of or a portion of the corkage fee, and that should be right in the regulations, right in the bill. There's no question that they're going to get reduced tips. We all agree with that; we know that. I would have liked to have seen an amendment that would have included that. The government didn't do that, but I'm still hoping very much that the government will see fit to sit down with HERE and work with them to make sure those waiters, after SARS—and we all know that restaurants and the hospitality industry were hurt. So this is good in some ways, in one small piece, to bring in more customers.

We do not want another situation where the workers who make the lowest wages and who were very hurt—that hospitality industry was very hurt—as a result of

SARS—and we haven't totally recovered from that. Some people think we have; we haven't. I do not want to see those people, those workers, hurt any more. I want to make sure that, if this bill passes, the government does everything in its power—and it has the power—to make sure that those corkage fees are reasonable for the consumer, but at the same time, the workers, the waiters, get the benefit of that corkage fee, so they don't end up on the receiving end of lower salaries. They cannot afford it; they're having a hard time supporting their families anyway. I would like to hear the minister make an absolute commitment to those workers.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): He can't hear you. He's not listening.

Ms Churley: Well, I'm hoping he's listening. He's not listening at the moment, but it's critical. Minister, I need you to listen to me here because I'm expressing my two concerns: drunk driving and all of the issues I've raised around that, but in particular—as well as that, not in particular but as well as—the waiters, the workers; that's my other big concern here.

Mr Marchese: I'm going to make the same point.

Ms Churley: I think Mr Marchese would like me to save him some time now. We need to make sure that those workers—unless I'm reassured of that, I'm not sure if I'm going to vote for it, because that's critical to me. I'm very close, after SARS in particular, to the hotel and restaurant industry, the workers, and I want to make sure, I want to make darned sure, that it is written in stone that they get a good percentage of that corkage fee. So with that, I will sit down and hope the minister will listen to this suggestion and make sure—

Mr Marchese: Take it into consideration.

Ms Churley: No, more than take it into consideration: actually do it.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Minister Watson has done an excellent job, I think, of explaining how Bill 96 will build the framework for future changes and benefits to our community. He has mentioned that our government wants to strike a balance between consumer choice in liquor service and stronger enforcement measures to increase public safety. The legislation before us, if enacted, would be the first significant change in 14 years. The real positive changes we're proposing will make our community safer, more vibrant and more prosperous.

The specific features of the bring-your-own-wine initiative would support responsible conduct. Each bottle would have to be opened by the licensee or by a server who would then have to keep track of how much was being consumed. Only unopened, commercially-made wine would qualify—no spiked or fortified wines with high alcohol levels, as the member from the other side suggested. Licensed restaurants would still have to comply with all liquor laws, even when patrons bring their own wine, and the licensee would continue, as is the case today, to be responsible to ensure that overconsumption or consumption by minors does not occur.

Although it's not part of this bill, the government also hopes to bring another consumer choice to Ontario, namely the option to take home the rest. With the take-home-the-rest option, existing controls on transporting open liquor and the ban on consuming it in public areas would remain in force. Taking your wine home could mean less consumption, not more, as people would not feel as compelled to finish the bottle at the table. In fact, we're encouraged that MADD felt positive about the take-home-the-rest option.

Let me quote directly from the committee hearings when my esteemed colleague from London North Centre asked, "I wonder if you could comment on the take-home-the-rest component of the legislation. Do you have an opinion on that aspect?" Mr Murie responded, "Yes, we've always been supportive of that. We've been clear on that right from day one. Rather than people finishing off alcohol they don't need, it makes sense to bring the rest home, if you seal it and it's properly controlled. We've never had an issue with that part of it."

Dr Norman Giesbrecht, senior scientist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, applauded our legislation, noting, "The proposal under consideration signals awareness of some of the risks, and the framers of it should be congratulated for the checks and balances included in the draft legislation."

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Whenever alcohol is involved, our goal is always to balance freedom with responsibility. I'm the parent of three teenaged daughters, two of whom drive, and the third is learning. I wouldn't want it any other way, I can tell you.

Shelley Timms, chair of the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, also applauded this balance, stating, "With respect to Bill 96, particularly those portions dealing with the bring-your-own-wine aspect, we're pleased to see that it's limited to existing licences and to particular restaurants ... take-home-the-rest will encourage people to stop drinking if they know they can take home the rest of the bottle." Clearly, responsible liquor service remains a top priority of this government.

To further address responsible liquor service, we are balancing these new choices for consumers and licensed restaurants with much stronger enforcement measures. For example, we want to allow the registrar of alcohol and gaming to be able to immediately suspend a liquor licence, if necessary, when in the public interest, as in situations where there's a clear threat to public safety.

The Ontario police association was adamant about this. I don't know what planet some members are on, but the simple truth of the matter is that when a licence is suspended like that, instead of the obligatory 15-day wait, it will be expedited to a five-day process.

Second, we will make it an offence to fail to leave licensed premises when required by a police officer or to return the same day after being asked to leave.

Third, we intend to double the minimum fines for offences related to underage persons drinking, to show in

the clearest possible way that we mean business when it comes to underage drinking.

Robert Shaw, detective inspector and chair of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, spoke in support of the tougher control methods we're proposing. He said, "The association of chiefs of police supports the provisions within Bill 96 to empower the registrar to issue interim suspensions." He then went on to talk about doubling the minimum fines, as well as other measures to enhance public safety.

We want to give businesses new opportunities to serve their customers and contribute to our modern lifestyle and enhancement of our quality of life. We also want to protect communities from the social harm that can occur when liquor is misused. The legislation outlined in Bill 96 advances these crucial goals, but it's only the first step. Our government is committed to a comprehensive review of the Liquor Control Act.

I'm pleased to speak to this bill and would urge all members of this assembly to support it to bring our liquor laws into the 21st century.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate. The member for Erie-Lincoln.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: The NDP trying to shut me down again.

Mr Marchese: Go ahead; I want to hear you. Don't let up.

Mr Hudak: I haven't even started yet. I appreciate the enthusiasm.

Interjections.

Mr Hudak: It's chaos in here, Speaker. It must be getting near Christmas and talking about alcohol.

I'm pleased to rise to address Bill 96. You know, this is the first time in weeks that I have not been addressing a time allocation motion but an actual third reading of a bill. So it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 96.

You heard our critic. The member for Cambridge I think put forward a very well-thought-out and comprehensive critique of this bill: some elements that the member liked but a number of elements that he expressed significant concerns about. It's obvious he's done his research in a comprehensive manner.

I supported this bill on second reading and, with the opportunity, will support it again tonight. Members on this side of the House, under our leader, John Tory, are viewing the legislation upon its merits, and some are voting for it. I think the majority of my colleagues will vote against it, considering the concerns that groups like MADD and the law enforcement side have. I believe that this legislation should pass.

I was proud to be part of a government—and serving as one-time Minister of Consumer and Business Services—that brought forward a number of changes to the Liquor Licence Act and the control system in Ontario.

I think our acts in many ways are Victorian and need to be modernized. In fact, under Minister Norm Sterling, the previous Minister of Consumer and Business Services, we brought forward a number of initiatives to do just that: for example, expanding the hospitality on to

golf courses and a 2-am close. Growing up in a border town, sadly, the occurrence was about 1 am or so when the bars closed in Fort Erie. We'd all hop in our cars and zoom over across the Peace Bridge to Niagara Falls, New York, to take advantage of the 3-am or 4-am close; I admit, in my youth, probably not the safest thing to have done on a regular basis. I was pleased to be part of a government under Mike Harris that made a 2-am close. I think it was a very reasonable, responsible move. You're not seeing that degree of crossing and danger on the roads.

At the same time, while we made those liberalizations to the act, we brought in strong enforcement provisions, including some of the toughest laws against drinking and driving and responsible ownership of hospitality establishments in Canada. So I'm proud of that record on the enforcement side. I'm proud of our record on the liberalization and modernization of the act.

As well, I'm pleased with the initiatives we made to support the Ontario wine industry: Direct delivery to restaurants and bars has been a boon to the Ontario wine industry, and with it comes a reduction in taxes, which they would pay if the wine had gone through the LCBO; enabling people to pay with credit cards in the hospitality sector, as opposed to always having cash; a number of these enhancements, hand-in-hand with expanding the shelf space for Ontario VQA wines and Ontario wines in general by over one kilometre of additional shelf space; and seeing the largest increase in sales of Ontario VQA wines under our government.

I encourage this government to stay on that track. I think it's absolutely vital that they do so because of the spin-offs in hospitality, tourism and agriculture from promoting our Ontario wine industry. I hope this act and any other changes the government brings forward will be done with that theme in mind: To continue to promote domestic growers and domestic wine. Particularly small brewers can often have a big impact in small towns, Mr Speaker, as you know.

There are, of course, some concerns. It's always interesting to see how this bill came about. I think timing is a lot in politics. If I recall, it was about the time the Minister of Finance was having significant problems—the controversy surrounding the Royal Group—when all of a sudden this bill came forward. There's nothing people like to talk about more than alcohol and animals. It will almost always dominate the news when legislation is brought forward that addresses either of those spheres. As they say, it was a good channel changer, and I think they have a couple more of those in hand. Perhaps beer or wine in the movie theatres might be another one they're saving up for the next time the finance minister gets into trouble. Anyway, I encourage the minister to move down this path. Maybe there are some other ideas left over at CBS that he could dust off and bring into this House.

Mr Marchese: It's good to have another opportunity to speak in the Legislature today, again on a different bill, Bill 96. I want to say to you, in the scheme of things,

if I were to rate the importance of this bill from one to 10, where would I put it on the basis of what people really care about or need or want out there?

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): It's a nine and a half, right after—

Mr Marchese: Can you believe that? My Liberal friend—where are you from?

Mr Arthurs: Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Mr Marchese: He puts the importance of this bill at nine or nine and a half. I would say, in the scheme of things, it wouldn't even merit a three. It's not because I'm opposed to it, but is it really that important to anyone out there? I mean, really? Speaker, are you with me? Of course you are.

How did they dream this up? Was it the minister who said, "I've really got a great idea. We need to put this out, because it's really going to make us popular. People are going to love it"? Or did every other Liberal backbencher say, "Yeah, this is really good. People love it out there. This is going to be great"?

1750

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): It is good.

Mr Marchese: What's good about this bill?

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: The minister says that this is about consumer choice. What kind of choice is this about?

Here's the problem—OK, me and you are going to work on this. The big restaurants, the chic ones, are not going to opt into this, right? They're going to say, "We're not interested." Why? Because rich boys, the guys and gals who've got the bucks, are not going to go to some cheesy restaurant or a second-rate restaurant; they're going to go to the fancy places and pay their 100 or 200 bucks, because people with money don't want to go and bring their own wines; people with money want to spend the 200 bucks on that bottle of wine—100, 200, 300 bucks. So those restaurants are going to opt out. There's no choice there, and the rich are well taken care of.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Bear with me. Work with me.

So what do you have left? You have the other restaurants. What are the other restaurants going to do with the issue of alcohol?

By the way, I've got a predilection for wine; I do. I am predisposed to enjoying Italian wines in particular, and Chilean wines as well, because I've got to divide allegiance in that regard. Part of it has to do with my wife and part of it has to do with the fact that when I go to Chile, they've got great wines, I've got to tell you.

Mr Patten: What about Ontario wines?

Mr Marchese: And Italian wines, lovely wines, but you've got to spend in the high range, \$20, \$22; the cheaper ones are not that great, in my humble view. I'm being a bit discriminatory, but Italian and Chilean wines are my favourites. I don't drink white wine. I have to tell you that. I don't drink white wine. I just don't like it.

Second, I like a wine that isn't too full-bodied and not too oaky. I can't stand too-oaky wines. I like them some-

what fulsome but not too fulsome and not too light but with some body, just like an espresso. I love espresso that isn't too bitter or too watery. It has to embody a combination of flavours, right in the middle, just the way Liberals would love.

I have expressed my predilection for wine: red. Having said that—

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I thought you were rosé.

Mr Marchese: Rosé, no.

The whole issue of going to the less expensive restaurants: They're not unhappy with this. Why? Because they'll be able to charge a corkage fee and it's pretty well going to amount to whatever rate, more or less, they would have charged if they had to go to the LCBO, buy it themselves and uncork it for you. All of that would pretty well, more or less, amount to the same thing. If a bottle of Chilean or Italian wine costs 10 bucks—including Canadian wines—or \$11 or \$12, you're going to be charged, more or less, 22, 23, 24 bucks. The restaurants are going to charge the extra \$10, \$11 or \$12 to uncork that bottle, which is great for restaurants, because now they don't have to go pick up the wine, deliver it, wait in line. It's a saving of a whole lot of time, so the corkage fee is OK by most restaurants.

The government comes here and says, "This is really great. We're going to give consumers a choice." A choice of what? To bring your own wine and then you get whacked with a \$10 or \$11 corkage fee, depending on the place and/or the wine? What kind of choice does the consumer have? Is the consumer going to save any money, which is, I think, the principle of bringing your own wine to a restaurant?

Mr McMeekin: No.

Mr Marchese: Oh, it's not? Member for Aldershot, the issue is not saving money? What is the issue?

Mr McMeekin: Choice.

Mr Marchese: Choice. The issue isn't saving money, because that's what I thought it was about. If the bill is about me taking my own wine and saving 20, 30 or 40 bucks, I say, God bless; this is about me. But if you're telling me, "You can bring your own wine and it's about choice," even though you get whacked with a corkage fee and it amounts to the same thing, what's the choice? What's this about choice? If I get charged—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Member for Aldershot, listen to me. Work with me on this, because I think we can reach a conclusion, you and I together.

A Chilean wine, 12 bucks, or a Canadian wine, 12 bucks, right? You can choose whatever bottle of Canadian wine you want, let's say, in the range of 10, 12, 13 bucks. Right? You can choose that. You go to the restaurant, and the restaurant owner says, "Here's the corkage fee"—another 10, 11 or 12 bucks. You're happy, because you say, "Ah, I chose the wine," but you get whacked with a corkage fee. What's the difference? Why bring your own wine instead of going to the restaurant and saying, "Give me that bottle of wine"?

Do you understand what I'm saying? Do you Liberals understand what I'm saying? What is it that you have gained by giving me the choice if I can go to the restaurant and I'm going to pay the same price? I've gained very little out of the experience.

Doctor, do you understand what I'm saying? He understands. Mercifully, a couple of people understand what I'm saying. The others have to deny and deny and deny and stick to the message that it is about choice, that somehow this revolutionary bill is going to finally give consumers a choice to bring whatever wine they want. But they are going to get whacked with a corkage fee that amounts to the same thing. So in the scheme of things, what does this bill do, really? And how important is this bill to Ontarians out there, in the scheme of things and what people worry about? Mercifully, the Liberals are giving you this revolutionary, radical bill that is going to give you a choice to bring whatever wine you want, and when you get there, you're going to get whacked with a corkage fee and it all amounts to the same thing.

Isn't this government illustrious, enlightened and so liberated that they give you so much for so little? Can you believe it? That's Bill 96. I guess they're going to vote on this very soon. Boy, how—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to put on the record that despite the lobbying attempts of Oliver Martin of Minister Watson's office, I remain unconvinced and will be voting against this bill.

The Acting Speaker: I don't believe that was a point of order.

We have now concluded the time the House has allocated for third reading debate of Bill 96, and I am now required to put the question.

Mr Watson has moved third reading of Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received from the chief government whip notification requesting deferral of this vote until tomorrow at deferred votes.

It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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